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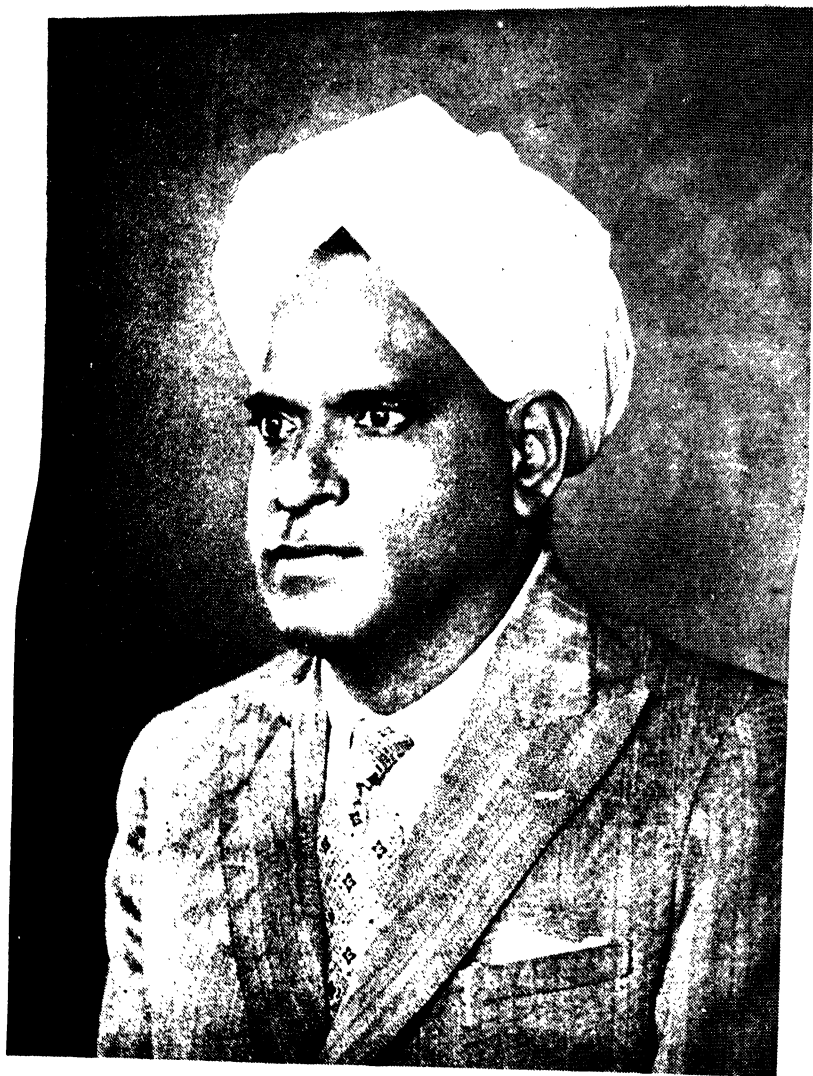


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**ALL THROUGH THE  
GANDHIAN ERA**



The Author



# ALL THROUGH THE GANDHIAN ERA

BY

A. S. IYENGAR



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## PREFACE

Editors and journalists in India do not generally write their memoirs as they do in other countries, more particularly in the West. Despite several handicaps in the profession, India has witnessed a remarkable growth in journalism. She has produced editors of ability and distinction like Surendra Nath Banerji, Motilal Ghosh, G. Subrahmanya Iyer, Kasthuri Ranga Iyengar, K. C. Roy, A. Rangaswami Iyengar, Kali Nath Ray, C. Y. Chintamani and S. A. Brelvi. Unfortunately, none of them has left behind an authentic account of their experiences in journalistic life or other recollections and reminiscences. The memoirs of B. G. Horniman entitled *Fifty Years of Journalism* were not even half way through when his own end came. C. Y. Chintamani wrote on Indian politics but nothing on journalism. Even books on Indian journalism are few and far between. It may be said of Indian editors that as a rule they work themselves to death in the profession, caring all the time for the life and well-being of the people but paying little or no attention to the intellectual needs of those who are engaged in the profession or are desirous of entering it.

The public in India know very little of the journalists, while even politicians have only an imperfect appreciation of their difficulties. The setting up of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference and the publication of its periodical proceedings have made the politicians as well as the public realize in a general way that pressmen have their own problems concerning the people and the Government. The Nehru-Liaquat Agreement of April 1950 has been followed by a joint session of the Standing Committees of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference and of the Pakistan Newspaper Editors' Conference held in New Delhi, at which a

complete understanding was reached as to the measures necessary to implement the Agreement so far as the pressmen of both the countries are concerned. This itself is the most significant development for which 1950 will be memorable in the annals of journalism as in the field of politics or statesmanship, bringing into bolder relief the close relationship between the Government and the Press in the interests of democracy and people's welfare.

It falls to but a few even among journalists to witness and record all the various political and other developments in the concentrated atmosphere at India's Capital and also at the annual or special sessions of the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and other political organizations. What I have attempted in this volume is a narration of the more important of my journalistic reminiscences spread over the past 35 years, *i.e.* from 1915 to 1950—a period of fast-changing scenes under the Gandhian leadership during which it was my privilege to serve as Editor of Reuters and the Associated Press (now known as the Press Trust) of India, and till very recently as the Principal Information Officer of the Government of India. On the canvas of these memoirs may be seen many newsreels and snapshots of incidents and personalities caught amid colourful scenes which may be of interest to students of Indian history or politics, besides the journalists. But objectivity has been the guiding principle throughout my narrative of anecdotes or impressions.

I must express my grateful thanks to the Director-General, All-India Radio, for permission to use some of my broadcasts, and to the editor, *Roy's Weekly*, New Delhi, for the liberty to quote from some of my contributions as a political commentator published in the journal during and after the Cripps Mission of 1942, as the latter provide a fitting background to the many scenes that India witnessed

four years later with the arrival of the British Cabinet Mission, resulting eventually in the withdrawal of British rule from the land of the Mahatma in August 1947 and the establishment of India as a Sovereign Democratic Republic under the Constitution of 1950.

**NEW DELHI**  
**6th May, 1950**

**A. S. IYENGAR**

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## PART I



## 1. FIRST STEPS

An autobiography, I suppose, is written when the author feels that he has approached the end of life's journey. I have no such feeling yet, though I have devoted 35 years to the profession of journalism most of which have been expended at the headquarters of the Government of India. The opportunities that came my way for observation, study and publicity have been many, and cover a variety of incidents in the Government, in the Legislature, in the Indian National Congress, in the Muslim League, as well as in the statutory and other inquiries, through what may be called the Gandhian Era. Whenever I related my journalistic reminiscences I was pressed by several friends to compile them in book form. Whenever I addressed journalist organizations on the experiences I have gathered from newspaper or news agency offices, as political columnist, and finally as head of the Information Bureau in the Government of India, I received unanimous appeals suggesting that I should publish my recollections. I hope, therefore, that what I write will be of special interest not only to those who aspire to my profession but also to those politicians with whom I came into close contact almost through three decades.

Journalism normally would require a good University education in order to equip its votary for a scientific study of the trends, policies, and ways of life, not merely of one's own country but of others as well. But while I was a student of the Madras Christian College my educational career ended abruptly due to the financial difficulties of my parents, and I had to study on my own by drawing information through various sources and deriving practical knowledge from valuable contacts. Indeed, opportunities for such study and therefore of service in my profession came to me in quick succession and I took advantage of them all in order to be better equipped for life's battle.

The life of a journalist consists largely of collecting people's impressions and thoughts, assessing them, and noting them down for the public. In this work phonography and typewriting are necessary accomplishments.

When I had occasion to visit England in 1932, I was told in the office of the *Times* that the editor often wrote editorials in shorthand and then dictated them. Recently in 1947 G. B. Shaw, announcing a new play, stated as follows :

“I am drafting it for the typist, as all my literary work has been drafted for 50 years past, in Pitman's Phonography—not in reporting shorthand which is a code, not an alphabet.....I did not become a playwright until I was 36. By that time I was using Pitman's Phonography. I insist on that term because ‘short-hand’ is always taken to mean verbatim reporting, which is useless to authors.”

My learning of shorthand had a very interesting origin. A commercial instructor in my school, attributing to me both general knowledge and a fair command of the English language, insisted that I should learn it. I hesitated, imagining that shorthand was an art that I would never be able to master. But it so happened that within a few months of my taking it up, I was able to write it with ease. Further, I stood first in my school that year. This encouraged me to pursue its study, and in two years I passed what was called the Advanced Grade in shorthand. Giving a summary of a rapidly read out speech as if for the newspapers constituted an important item of the test. Some of the editors of the newspapers in Madras came to know from Dewan Bahadur C. V. Mmumswami Iyer (Chief Reporter of the *Madras Mail*) who was one of the examiners that mine was the best of the year. The fact was that I retained in my memory the trend of the speech so well that with the help of the shorthand notes I was able to give a connected summary in the shortest time. When the editor of the *Indian Patriot* came to know

of my success, he was eager to secure me for the post of a Reporter. A few days later I joined that office. Thus did I enter on my career of journalism in 1915.

By way of introduction to journalism, I had already had an opportunity, though for a brief period, to work with an eminent politician. Nawab Syed Mohammad Saheb Bahadur was, in 1913, elected President of the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress. He wanted a stenographer. I went there professedly with that qualification. But it was a good opportunity to acquaint myself with the politics of those days. The duty assigned to me was to go daily to Mr G. Subramania Iyer (the founder of the *Hindu* and the *Swadesamitran*) and take down notes which I had to transcribe for the benefit of Nawab Syed Mohammad. But while doing so I put in my own literary touches or other changes of which Mr Subramania Iyer himself expressed appreciation several times. It was Subramania Iyer's opinion that I would do well in journalism and he promised to help me get a job on a newspaper. I did not show much enthusiasm, until, as stated above, the editor of the *Indian Patriot* himself sent for me and took me on.

The Presidential addresses of the Congress in those days largely eulogized Mr M. K. (later Mahatma) Gandhi for the great services he had been rendering to Indians in South Africa and of the part Lord Hardinge had been playing in India as Viceroy. There were the usual appeals for simultaneous examinations for Civil Service in India and England and separation of the judicial from the executive functions in Government. Altogether every presidential address seemed to be an attempt at displaying the speaker's knowledge of the English vocabulary. It was as pleasant to those who heard it as to those who read it. The Congress of those days was composed of language-loving men, and whoever could write in the mid-Victorian style was a great politician. It was all mere words, sound and fury, signifying nothing.

## 2. FIRST LAURELS

But merely the art of shorthand and some little command of the English language are inadequate for the making of a journalist. He must keep his ears and eyes wide open, and have the capacity to assess intelligently the trend of events and sense news even in small things. He must always keep self-confident in the midst of the jealousy of professional rivals, and must not be swayed by party wrangles in the body politic. Almost my first professional laurels were won in connexion with a special meeting of the Senate of the Madras University, following the publication of the University Examination results. It was in 1916 that there was what had been described as a 'slaughter' of the candidates in the Intermediate Examination. The Madras University in those days exercised more severity in the valuation of papers. Mr T. V. Seshagiri Iyer (a Judge of the Madras High Court) who was a member of the Senate, felt so grieved over the 'slaughter' of the candidates at the Examination that he moved a resolution to the effect that those who had obtained a minimum of 30% marks in English should be declared to have passed the examination. The proposal was debated for three hours, attracting many good speakers. But opposition was voiced by a few English professors. Notable among them was Rev. Macphail. He made a long speech, full of vituperation and scorn. But one sentence which he happened to utter, somewhat parenthetically towards the end was: "You bring jutkawallas and rickshawallas to the examination hall, and when they fail, you complain of enormous slaughter." This sentence struck me as the most noteworthy from the reporter's point of view and I featured it in my paper—the *Indian Patriot*. I was not aware that by so doing I had created a commotion in the student world, as well as among my fellow-journalists. The students at the Fenn Hostel attached to the Christian College

held a meeting, protested against the observations of Rev. Macphail, and gave him the choice between his resignation and an apology. When this resolution reached the hands of the editors of Madras newspapers, based as it was on the report published in the *Indian Patriot* for which I was solely responsible, the fat was in the fire. Dewan Bahadur C. V. Munuswami Iyer, Chief Reporter of the *Madras Mail*, on whose recommendation I had entered journalism, was himself one of the victims of the editorial wrath in his office ! And there were others too—veteran reporters, all now ranged against me ! Did Rev. Macphail at all speak those words or had I committed a mistake ? As for me, I had recorded the remark neither in shorthand nor in longhand. The words fell on my ears and that was enough for my purpose. I do not take down everything that I hear. So I had nothing to produce by way of evidence to convince my colleagues or even my editor. Mr Munuswami Iyer therefore went to his friend Mr G. A. Natesan, a Fellow of the Madras University, who had been present at the Senate meeting, to make sure if the report I had published was correct. And he confirmed it ! Munuswami Iyer and others then felt that this was a scoop on my part which I confess gave every other reporter a few anxious moments. But this incident would appear to be trifling compared to the big news I happened to make of that significant political party—the Justice Party—even at the very moment of its birth.

### 3. THE NON-BRAHMIN PARTY

This story is about a meeting which had not been publicized and to which no journalist had been invited. One Sunday afternoon I was walking towards the Beach from Mint Street, when, within the premises of a High School, I found a large gathering. I discovered that they had met

there to consider certain communal problems. A few weeks earlier Dr T. M. Nair had been defeated in the Madras Corporation election by his rival, Dewan Bahadur T. Ranga-chariar. Dr Nair was an unforgiving foe. In collaboration with Sir P. Thyagaraya Chetty he was planning the formation of a Party to check 'the Brahmin ascendancy' in all institutions and services. Another pointer was the publication, that very month, of a book entitled *Non-Brahmin Letters* from the office of the *Indian Patriot*. Nobody objected to my presence at the meeting. I do not remember today, after over 35 years, who presided, but there were present Sir P. Thyagaraya Chetty and Dr T. M. Nair, and among the speakers was Mrs Alamelumanga Thayarammal. The general trend of the speeches made was that Brahmins, though they were a bare three per cent of the population, had monopolized the Services and thereby denied opportunities to the Non-Brahmins. It was sufficient excuse for a battle-cry on behalf of a community that was so overwhelmingly in the majority. And the meeting also formulated a plan that I suspected to be the first evidence of a communal revolt, and I thought that many more things might follow in its wake, which might alter the shape of things, communal as well as political, in South India. I therefore gave a comprehensive summary in the *Indian Patriot* next morning. A scoop it proved to be, for we know that subsequently there was a great Non-Brahmin movement, with the Justice Party as the spearhead, which captured political power under the constitution set up by the Montagu-Chelmsford Act. Even before this report appeared in the *Indian Patriot* I walked over to the office of *New India* to tell Mrs Besant about it. She was so busy engaged in writing editorial notes for her evening paper that she preferred to see me the next day. But when the report was actually published in my paper it created a sensation in the whole of South India where it marked the beginning of a great ferment.



The envy provoked among rivals in the profession by such scoops is but a passing phase. The politicians in South India, including Mrs Annie Besant, felt that I had some political intuition in addition to reporting ability. At any rate, when the Provincial Political Conference was held under the presidentship of Dewan Bahadur P. Kesava Pillai in Madras some of those on the dais including Mrs Besant consulted me regarding the language in which the main Resolution was to be adopted. Seeing that I was held in some esteem by so many leaders, Mr N. C. Rajagopalachari took me aside in the hall and offered me a high post in the office of the *Madras Times* of which he was the proprietor. But I had already received from Sir C. Y. Chintamani a letter of appointment on the *Leader* of Allahabad.

#### 4. FIRST CONTACT WITH GANDHIJI

I must refer to one other incident that occurred before I left Madras, which brought me in contact for the first time with Mr Mohandas Karamchand (later Mahatma) Gandhi. As I have mentioned earlier, Mr M. K. Gandhi's was already a name to conjure with. His activities in South Africa had formed the theme of Presidential addresses in Congress sessions. Tilak and Gokhale were no doubt better known in India till then. But the passive resistance movement, so successfully conducted in South Africa by Gandhiji, had stirred the mind of modern India. Mr Gandhi had been in India for some months then. He had attended the inaugural ceremony of the Benares Hindu University founded by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya with the help of donations received from Princes and people all over India. This ceremony was enlivened by the "walk-out incident" led by Mrs Annie Besant in which the Maharaja of Patiala and others were participants. The offender was said to be Mr Gandhi,

because he had advised the Princes to disgorge themselves of their jewels and devote themselves to the service of the people. The fact of the matter was that Mrs Annie Besant was trying to capture the political arena, whereas Gandhiji, in spite of his South African laurels, was merely watching the situation and trying to gauge public opinion. She had been using strong language against the British Government even in her paper *New India*. In fact, the Press Act was directed against her paper by the Government of Lord Pentland; this was followed by the prosecution of Mrs Besant, the editor, and her internment under the Defence of India Act. Everybody felt that Mrs Besant was making a bid for the presidency of the Congress. But in South India the public mind was becoming enthusiastic over the achievements of the Mahatma in South Africa. It was clear that Mrs Besant did not take kindly to Gandhiji. The report of the walk-out at Benares led to sharp differences in the public versions about it. Gandhiji himself came to Madras from Benares for the first time after his return from South Africa. He arrived by the Bombay train, and the desire of the public of Madras to have a *darshan* of him was so great that the Railway authorities had a pretty rough time controlling the crowd. I was standing for an hour on the platform but was slowly pushed towards the rear. When the train steamed in, there was a scramble towards the First Class compartments. I found myself at the further end in front of a Third Class compartment. Wearing a dhoti, a white *Kurtha*, and a heavy Kathiawari turban, a calm unruffled figure got down, accompanied by another gentleman. The latter asked me where Mr G. A. Natesan was. (Mr Natesan was the principal office-bearer of the South African Indian Relief Society in South India.) I replied that he was looking for Gandhiji near the First Class compartment. He smiled and at once said, "Here is Mr Gandhi." (The word "Mahatma" was not in vogue at the time; it was

the endearing appellation given to him at the Ahmedabad session of the Congress in 1921.) From the end of the platform I sent word through the crowd to Mr Natesan who was still standing with a garland in hand in front of the First Class compartment! But the word quickly passed through the surging mass of humanity, and in a minute or two there was a stampede towards the hero of South Africa, for whose simple way of life Third Class travel was a natural consequence. As for me, the few seconds I had with Gandhiji were most precious. The little I could gather from him in that short time became an exclusive interview for my paper, whereas my colleagues had to be content with merely reporting his arrival. The next morning Gandhiji addressed a public meeting in the Y. M. C. A. Auditorium, where not merely the student community of Madras, but leaders of eminence had assembled. I am not sure if Mrs Besant was in Madras at the time, but there was Gandhiji who could lift the mystery that surrounded the Benares incident. As soon as he entered the hall a slip was handed to him by a student requesting him to throw light on it. But immediately Gandhiji gave a gentle rebuke. "These are but passing waves that come and go," was his short comment. Then he spoke about Brahmacharya, truthfulness, punctuality and sacrifice as the only way of life.

## 5. AT ALLAHABAD

Arriving in Allahabad on a hot afternoon in September 1917, I proceeded to the office of the *Leader* which was then situated close to the residence of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who was its patron along with such distinguished figures as Pandit Malaviya and Rai Krishnaji of Benares. The *Leader* in those days was not merely a newspaper but an institution because of the personality of C. Y. Chintamani. What Chintamani read he remembered. What he remembered he

could produce at any time and at any place. He could repeat word for word the Presidential addresses of all the Congress sessions till 1916. When the Montagu-Chelmsford report was published in 1919, he read it twice but remembered several important passages sufficiently, even while writing editorials, to quote extensively from memory ! His memory was prodigious and there are few who could vie with him, though from personal observation I know there have been quite a few like Sir Surendranath Banerjee and Sir Phiroze Sethna who could, from memory, speak what they had set down in manuscript. Whenever Chintamani spoke there was awe all round, not because he was laying down any new doctrine, but because his study of the subject was so profound. His mastery of the details of anything that he handled was something upon which he could stand the most severe cross-examination. But though he roused one's admiration, he did not touch the heart. He could give tips on politics to politicians, but he could never himself be an active politician except perhaps as a legislator. Such was Chintamani, as ready with his tongue as with his pen, and his memory—memory of facts convenient as well as inconvenient, memory of details which people would never perhaps care to remember. He became a relentless critic of Mrs Annie Besant who was then in steady ascendancy on the political firmament and was the President of the Congress in 1917 and also of Mahatma Gandhi for not only capturing the Congress but revolutionizing its political outlook and programme.

## 6. FIRST WALK-OUT BY MOTILAL NEHRU

Within a few days of my joining the *Leader* I had to go to Naini Tal with Sir C. Y. Chintamani to report the proceedings of the U. P. Legislative Council of which he was a member. Sir James (afterwards Lord) Meston presided over the session. Pandit Motilal Nehru was also a member. He

had not become a Swarajist or a Congressman, but the influence of his son Pandit Jawaharlal, who himself was swaying between Mrs Annie Besant on one side and Mahatma Gandhi on the other, was gradually working on him. A few days before, at the Engineering College at Roorkee, which was run with the financial aid of the Provincial Government, Mr Wood, the Principal, had delivered a speech in disparagement of the national character of Indians. Pandit Motilal got enraged and moved a resolution protesting against the pronouncement of Mr Wood. The Council was dominated by Government officials and other nominated members though the elected members were somewhat vociferous. The influence of the head of the Province, who occupied the Chair, was also inevitably felt. There was no doubt an animated debate, but the Resolution was rejected. Pandit Motilal was not the man to take a defeat lying down. He was a proud man. Immediately after the result was announced he stood up to make a personal statement. When he asked for permission, Sir James Meston wondered what it could be about. Motilal suavely remarked: "It is just a personal statement." Nobody could suspect what was coming. Motilal said (and I am quoting from memory): "The manner in which my Resolution has been rejected, as well as the debate that preceded it, make me feel convinced that no self-respecting person can any longer associate himself with the proceedings of this House. I therefore beg permission to withdraw from this Chamber and resign my seat." This was Motilal Nehru's first walk-out from a Legislative Council. Later he resorted to many more walk-outs in the Central Assembly when he became the leader of the Swaraj and Congress parties.

The walk-out occurred amidst consternation, for none could imagine that Motilal Nehru of all persons could ever insult the head of the Province!—such were the friendly relations that had existed between Ananda Bhavan and Government House for decades. Sir Sundarlal, Pandit Jagat

Narain, Munshi Narayan Prasad Asthana and many others trooped out of the hall requesting Motilal Nehru in the lobby to come back. The scenes that I witnessed in the lobby of the U. P. Legislative Council are still fresh in my memory. They bore witness to a change which had overtaken Indian politics. It was the first warning to the British Government that the petitioning policy adopted in the Legislative Councils was being displaced even on the part of the Moderates in favour of a desire for a policy of only responsive co-operation. This political tendency, originated by Mrs Besant, came afterwards to be replaced by the policy of non-co-operation inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi ! As for Sir James Meston, he was completely taken aback. There was an irrevocable parting of the ways between him and Motilal. My flash message had gone to the *Leader* and I made a feature of the incident with all the details in my account of the proceedings.

Not only did Motilal leave the Chamber for good, but over the telephone he asked Jawaharlal Nehru to bring his car and meet him at Bareilly station. Somewhere at an intermediate station Motilal Nehru, so I was informed, purchased a copy each of the *Pioneer* and the *Leader*. The *Pioneer* (it used to cost four annas a copy in those days) contained nothing of the walk-out incident ! The *Leader*, on the other hand, had splashed my message !! After the session was over, I returned to Allahabad and was as usual watching a case in the High Court. Pandit Motilal invited me to the Advocates' Association room. I give below the conversation that took place between us.

*Question :* Do you represent the *Leader* ?

*Answer :* Yes.

*Question :* Was it you who reported the U. P. Legislative Council proceedings ?

*Answer :* Yes.

*Question :* How long have you been in the profession ?

*Answer :* Three years.

*Question :* You approve of my walk-out ?

*Answer :* Yes.

*Question :* Where were you in Madras before you joined the *Leader* ?

*Answer :* The *Indian Patriot*.

*Question :* What is the policy of the *Indian Patriot* about Mrs Besant ?

*Answer :* One of cautious support.

This was the first talk I had with Motilal Nehru. I mention this because several months later he was responsible for my leaving the office of the *Leader* and joining the *Independent* started by him in January 1919. As I said before, the word 'defeat' was absent from the vocabulary of Pandit Motilal. The politics of the U. P. were undergoing a change from the moderatism of Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjee to the Home Rule politics of Tilak and Mrs Besant. Gandhiji had not actively entered the arena, because he was under a promise to Gokhale to do nothing without a full study of the situation in India.

A result of the changing politics in the U. P. was the desire on the part of Motilal Nehru to have a newspaper of his own. He was a shareholder of the *Leader* and was dissatisfied with its policy. There was a meeting fixed of the shareholders of the *Leader*. Chintamani somehow scented that an attempt might be made to change the policy, and he gathered a number of proxies and secreted them in his pocket. When Motilal suggested a change of policy in favour of Besant's Home Rule League movement, Chintamani routed it out by presenting the proxies against it !! Would Motilal Nehru accept defeat ? No. He resolved instead to bring out a rival paper in Allahabad.

## 7. FROM "LEADER" TO "INDEPENDENT"

A few months later the *Independent* was inaugurated with the active personal help of Mr B. G. Horniman (then of the *Bombay Chronicle*) who brought with him Syed Hussain for the editorship. There was in those days a glamour about Horniman and an aura about Syed Hussain, a particularly handsome East-Bengal Muslim with an Oxford education. What Horniman did not know about journalism was not worth knowing at all. What Syed Hussain could write was, of course, the best. This was the conception in Ananda Bhavan. The paper was started but without an efficient management. No newspaper—not even a political party organ started with missionary zeal—could be a success in the long run if it neglected its business side.

Motilal Nehru telephoned to me one afternoon inviting me to tea. I went there and whom did I see but Jawaharlal Nehru. Resplendent in a suit of foreign materials (no khaddar in those days), he was reading a book on Russia. The following conversation took place between Motilal and me.

*Question :* Iyengar, how are you getting on ?

*Answer :* Very well, Punditjee.

*Question :* Did you hear that Motilal Nehru is going to start a first-class paper ?

*Answer :* Yes. I heard that you are going to start a paper, but whether it will be first-class.....

*Question :* What ? When Motilal starts a paper it must be first-class. Don't you know that ? (I smiled.)

*Question :* Now, Iyengar, I have invited you over to tell you that you are my man from now on.

I was taken aback and queried rather incredulously : "What do you mean, Punditjee ?"

Motilal replied : "I have decided that you should join the *Independent*."

I reacted : "I came to Allahabad at the instance of



Chintamani and now you say that *you* have decided. Where do I stand?"

He replied: "You stand by me. If it is a question of your salary, all I say is that to whatever you get now, you add 50 per cent."

"It is indeed flattering, Punditjee, but may I have some time to think? Even if I join the *Independent* I will have to give a month's notice to the *Leader*. These formalities have to be observed."

Motilal exclaimed: "Notice! What for? Don't bother about it. You better join the *Independent* tomorrow. If there be any case against you, remember Pandit Motilal Nehru will argue for you." Really I was not prepared for this most generous though arbitrary treatment. His mind was made up. My mind was torn at the moment between my loyalty to Chintamani and the affection which Motilal was bestowing on me. I was confused and so I pleaded for time and went home.

It was a dreadful night—of conflict, fears, and indecision. The day dawned, and I consulted S. Ranga Iyer, a dear friend who is now no more, who was partly instrumental in my taking up journalism in Madras. (I later initiated him into the Assistant Editorship of the *Leader*. He afterwards became the first Editor of *Roy's Weekly* which was founded by U. N. Sen, Durga Das and myself in memory of the greatest Indian journalist—the founder of the Associated Press of India, Keshav Chandra Roy.) Ranga Iyer did not hesitate to give me advice. "Iyengar—Motilal is a giant, and when he is so very well disposed towards you, it would be inadvisable to reject his offer."

My attachment to Chintamani was strong. But fate had ordained that I leave him. An hour later, I went to Chintamani and told him the whole story. His impatience and wrath burst out like a volcano. His face grew longer, but surprisingly enough his speech shorter. He realized that my heart was with him, and exclaimed: "I see that you are

being dragged away by my political enemy. I cannot say what you should do. It is for you to decide." He pulled out two letters from a rack and said: "Here are two letters about you in terms of the highest praise from Horniman for your having corrected his erroneous rendering of the Rowlatt Bill in his speech at the public meeting. I knew that you were fast becoming the favourite of 'Ananda Bhavan' but never could I imagine that Motilal would be so inimical to the *Leader* as to physically possess you. What is my advice worth pitted against that of Motilal Nehru?" Later, calming down, he added: "I see, you are not to be my man. If that is so, all I want is that you should not only give a month's notice, but give me a man in whom you have confidence." This I did to his satisfaction.

A reference is here necessary to both the Rowlatt Bill and the Indemnity Bill. The Rowlatt Bill was published towards the end of 1918 and it was a signal for an all-India agitation against the enormous powers allotted to the police for arrest and detention. It was considered a deliberate affront to the dignity of India whose countrymen had shed their blood in the First World War. Whatever the motive, one thing was clear, that the country was in a state of widespread discontent. The first public meeting in India against the measure was held at Allahabad and presided over by Pandit Motilal Nehru. It was addressed by B. G. Horniman who had come to help in starting the *Independent*. I was still with the *Leader*. I had sent a two-column report to my office and had gone to bed, when a peon woke me up with a chit from Chintamani to say that he had received a message from Ananda Bhavan to the effect that Horniman was a little worried in that he had not himself correctly explained the provisions of the Bill. I replied that I had corrected everything in the report. The next morning when I went to office, Ramnath Dhar, a sub-editor (who was in close touch

with Ananda Bhavan) informed me that Horniman was so pleased at my having corrected his speech in the report that he wanted to meet and thank me. An epistle from Ananda Bhavan also reached Chintamani the same day in the *Leader* office. This was, however, not shown to me until some months later when I was leaving Chintamani to join the *Independent*.

It was to protest against the Rowlatt Bill, and the humiliation that people were subjected to, that public meetings were held all over India, one such being at Jallianwalla Bagh, a big quadrangle surrounded by mud walls in the city of Amritsar, where General Dyer thought it necessary to turn his machine guns on a crowd. This place I visited in November 1919. But shortly before that, there was a debate in the old Imperial Legislative Council held at Simla, presided over by Lord Chelmsford who was then Viceroy. The Bill was intended to indemnify officers for acts committed by them during the disturbances in the Punjab in discharge of their duties. The agitation against it that manifested itself throughout the country was demonstrated in the Council by Pandit Malaviya with a speech lasting over six hours. Pandit Motilal, Pandit Jawaharlal and I had gone to Simla to watch the proceedings of the Council, which were held at the Viceregal Lodge. That was the first time I visited Simla and met all-India Legislators at the seat of the Government of India. Pandit Malaviya's oration was one majestic flow like that of the mighty Ganges, and, in spite of its having lasted so many hours, was listened to and read with unwavering attention both by members of the Government and the public. His criticism was pungent, his sarcasm biting. Officials were amazed that an Indian could speak in a foreign language with such fluency and diction. Those were also the days when bureaucrats lent their ears to non-official grievances, even if they were unable to redress them. For two days during the debate Pandit Motilal Nehru himself acted as Special Observer for the *Independent*. His reports

were published prominently and read widely. He however soon preferred that I should cover the session in full for the *Independent* which I did, I believe, with some credit. I watched and reported the proceedings not from the Press Gallery but from the Public Gallery, for I had not gone to Simla equipped with a letter from the U. P. Government as required by the rules. Pandit Malaviya with whom I was staying at Shanti Kuti in Simla applied daily for my ticket of admission to the Visitors' Gallery, better known as Strangers' Gallery. But from the Public Gallery I watched the handful of Pressmen sitting in the Press Gallery opposite. There were K. C. Roy, Sir Edward Buck, Sir U. N. Sen and Durga Das, who had just joined the Agency. I knew none of them personally at that time. But just a few weeks later it was decreed by Providence that I should join them. And not only join them, but play an important role in the working of the Associated Press of India, an agency owned till the end of 1948 by Reuters in India. Little did I imagine when I was writing my copy from the Public Gallery, that I was to transfer my activities to the Press Gallery in such a short time.

The story of the *Independent* is one of a brief and chequered career. The public know what happened to Syed Hussain a few months later, for he had to leave India. The artificial respiration given to the *Independent* occasionally by Jawaharlal Nehru did nothing to help it. Its finances were in doldrums. Motilal Nehru was drawing on his bank heavily to feed the White Elephant, but even Motilal's purse had its limits. Just at this time, telegrams were received by Syed Hussain from Gandhiji and Malaviya (then at Lahore) and also from Motilal Nehru at Amritsar that I should proceed to Lahore to report the proceedings of the Hunter Committee on the Punjab disorders, in order that the Enquiry Committee started by the Congress to look into those very disorders might be able to produce its report ahead of the Government Committee. It was the decision

of Motilal again, and I was helpless. Syed Hussain did not want me to leave Allahabad, but who could withstand Motilal's wishes? So I proceeded to Lahore and for weeks I was engaged in compiling material for the Congress Enquiry Committee with which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was closely associated. One day I received a packet containing letters and also telegrams that had been sent by K. C. Roy of the Associated Press to my office address at Allahabad. They contained an offer of appointment on the editorial staff of the News Agency at the Headquarters of the Government of India. I had known the working of the Associated Press Agency from the distance of newspaper offices, but a few minutes' conversation with P. P. Iyer (who was also at Lahore in connexion with the reporting of the Hunter Committee) enabled me to make up my mind. And the next morning I telegraphed my acceptance of the offer.

But how was I now to leave the *Independent* and join the Associated Press? What was the procedure to adopt? A year before, Motilal Nehru had said that I need not give even the required month's notice to the *Leader*. Was it necessary for me now to give one month's notice? Was it fair that I should leave the *Independent* without making them fully appreciate the need for my being relieved? So I thought it best to go from Lahore to Amritsar where Motilal Nehru was engaged in drafting the Presidential Address of the Congress Session with the assistance of Mr A. Rangaswami Iyengar. I had already sent a formal notice to the Editor of the *Independent*. This news had evidently reached Motilal Nehru, so that when I went to see him, the following conversation took place :

*Question :* Well, are you still associated with the *Independent* or already associated with the Associated Press ?

*Answer :* I am still associated with the *Independent* but would like to join the Associated Press in January.

*Question :* But who is to do my Congress for the *Independent* ?

*Answer :* Of course, I shall.

"Then it is all right, Iyengar; you have done well in accepting the Associated Press offer, and you have my whole-hearted support. Tell Shyamji [Pandit Shyamlal Nehru, the manager] that I have given you two months' salary as gratuity and you can join the Associated Press after the Congress session."

I left Motilal with our relationship at its best, a factor which I valued most. When I was Editor of the Associated Press in Delhi and Simla, he came as the leader of the Swaraj Party, and there were innumerable occasions on which I could help him with news and he helped me with views and statements. News is a matter of the closest link and understanding between the journalist and the man whose activities constitute such news.

## 8. GANDHIJI'S FIRST CAPTURE—JAWAHARLAL

I must refer to an incident which occurred before I left Allahabad. One day in 1919 when I went to the office of the *Leader* there was great excitement among the members of the press staff, particularly the compositors. I enquired what the matter was. They replied: "Don't you know that Gandhiji came here last night and had a talk with Chintamani early this morning? Actually, Gandhiji came and sat with us round the midnight fire on the lawn. We had *chana* and *moongphali* and went on talking till early morning. But at day-break when Chintamani came out, Gandhiji went up to him and had a talk. It was then that we discovered that he was Gandhiji. Chintamani took Gandhiji to task for not having come in and slept. But Gandhiji replied: 'I was having quite a nice time with the people round the fire, and at any rate I did not need a bed.'" This was the purport of the conversation that was given to me and it showed how

Gandhiji was identifying himself with the people, travelling Third, associating with one and all, understanding their grievances, thinking out their problems and finding solutions for them. His first devotee in the U. P. was Jawaharlal Nehru whose appearance in the High Court as a lawyer, assisting his father, became more and more infrequent. Jawaharlal thought faster than his father, worked harder and captured the mind of the youth of the U. P. in a very short time. The conversion of Jawahar meant the conversion of entire Ananda Bhavan, father, mother, sister and all. And through him Gandhiji captured not only the U. P. but the entire country. Motilal Nehru was proud of himself but prouder of his son. He was no doubt happy when he became President of the Congress twice but even more so when he watched his son presiding over the Lahore session of the Congress in 1929, which declared that the goal of India was to be Complete Independence.

The Montagu-Chelmsford scheme had given votes to a large number of people, and also introduced dyarchy, though it was found impracticable. The end of the First Great War had brought in new ideas from abroad, and within the country, Gandhiji was infusing a new spirit among Congressmen—the spirit of service. Even Mrs Annie Besant found that her Home Rule League politics could not compete with the Gandhian plan of service through suffering, non-co-operation and civil disobedience. Tilak's demise only hastened the spread of the new ideals, so that in December 1920 when the Congress met at Nagpur under the presidency of C. Vijayaraghavachariar, there were definite signs of a break with the past. Motilal became a silent observer but Jawaharlal was more active. Nevertheless, politics were passing into the hands of Gandhiji. Vithalbhai Patel was Secretary of the Congress in 1920 and Vallabhbhai Patel was there already as the leader of the peasants of Gujerat. The former helped

to shift the Congress responsibility from the hands of the Moderates to those of Gandhiji. And for the next year the Congress session was invited to Ahmedabad—the home town of Mahatma Gandhi.

Soon after the Amritsar session of the Congress, Gandhiji accompanied by Pandit Motilal Nehru came to Delhi. He was staying with Prof. S. K. Rudra, Principal of St. Stephen's College, in the old building at Kashmere Gate. Syed Hussain, who had resigned the editorship of the *Independent*, was also in Delhi. Thus, although I had just joined the Associated Press, I felt that I was amidst familiar surroundings. But Syed Hussain was leaving for America on a lecture tour.

To recall an instance of his editorship of the *Independent*. The excitement over the disturbances in the Punjab, Delhi, and other areas had not subsided, but there was a lot of jubilation in official circles at having suppressed the Indian uprising. A report to this effect was sent by Asaf Ali as a journalist from Delhi. That report was published by Syed Hussain in the *Independent* under the heading "Devils Dance while Angels Weep". It was considered objectionable, not only by the officials in Delhi, but by Moderate opinion in India. Pandit Malaviya talking with me in Lahore at the residence of Lala Harkishan Lal, described it as a piece of singularly unbalanced journalism. But Syed Hussain was news editor *par excellence* of the sensational type, and he revelled in the startling headlines of the *Independent* which often caused annoyance to the official world.

## 9. DELHI GROWS

The three decades that I have passed in Delhi coincided with the rise of New Delhi as the official Capital of the Indian Government. Its legislative institutions sought to re-



tard the pace of political consciousness and canalize it through representative assemblies. Seeking its beginnings at the end of the First World War as the seat of the British Empire it became the seat of the National Government soon after the end of the Second World War. The intervening period witnessed great movements and changes throughout the country reflected in the debates and demonstrations of political parties within the Legislature. When I recall how New Delhi grew out of ancient ruins as it were, I cannot but marvel that the three decades witnessed such a revolution in everything: politically, constitutionally, and socially. There were only three or four roads like the Cantonment Road, now called the Irwin Road, and the Sonaribagh Road with a few buildings dotted here and there. The construction work was in vigorous progress all over Raisina. The area where the Viceroy's House is situated was heaped with dynamite because the hillock had to be blasted before the level could be set for building the Government House thereon. In no other country in the world perhaps would such enormous expenditure be incurred for the construction of a Viceroy's dwelling. It is of such dimensions that one of the first acts of the Indian Governor-General, after the exit of the British, was to allot all the available space to the expanding Secretariat of the Government of India. It has also been decided that the large State Rooms should be released for appropriate Government functions arranged by the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet. That as much as 10,000 sq. ft. of accommodation could be released for use as offices of the Government of India shows the colossal waste that was practised under the British regime. For, at a time when there was scarcity of accommodation in New Delhi, many offices occupied hutments and tents. For the first time too, an Arts Exhibition was held in one wing of the Government House. This was precipitated by the pressure of public opinion voiced through the Press, particularly in Delhi.

When I say this I cannot but recall the fact that when the Viceregal Lodge was first under construction in New Delhi there was no Press worth the name at the Capital. There was only<sup>1</sup> one newspaper called the *Morning Post* which was a small eight page issue containing rather stale items of news besides a few advertisements, very similar to what was called the *Liddel's Weekly*, published in Simla for several years. A vast transformation has occurred during these three decades, aided perhaps by the Hitler War which saw the end of the British Rule in India and also a phenomenal growth of the nationalist press in several languages including the *Hindustan Times*, *Hindustan*, *Tej*, *Arjun*, *Milap*, *Pratap*, etc.

Before the Government House and Secretariat were built in New Delhi we used to live at the extreme north of Old Delhi on Alipore Road near Khyber Pass. The Central Assembly met in the Council Hall that was later given over to the Delhi University, which too did not find it satisfactory to its requirements and had to shift to the former Viceregal Lodge in Old Delhi. As for the Council of State, it was lodged close by at Metcalfe House, where now the office of the Central Administrative Service Training School is located. Between these two small unpretentious buildings the legislators of those days were, however, able to turn out a fair amount of work reflective of the growing nationalistic tendencies of the time.

There were stalwarts like Sir William Vincent as the Home Member, Sir Malcolm (now Lord) Hailey as the Finance Member and die-hards like Sir Charles Innes, who constituted the bureaucracy with Lord Reading as the Viceroy. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had joined the Government as Law Member. The constitution was inaugurated by the Duke of Connaught. One sentence of his still lives in the memory of those who heard it: "The shadow of Amritsar has lengthened over the fair face of India." In another passage he conveyed the message of the King in which there were the

significant words: “Forget and forgive.” Otherwise, it was a passionate plea to India to work the constitution devised by Mr Montagu and Lord Chelmsford. Mrs Annie Besant, finding that the Congress leadership had in effect been taken over by Gandhiji, was herself beginning to incline more and more towards Moderate politics. She was seated next to me in the Press Gallery of the Legislative Assembly on the occasion of this inaugural ceremony. I noticed her nodding approval and thumping the table in response to the appeal made by the Duke of Connaught. So far as she was concerned, it was clear that there was a definite break with the Congress. Though afterwards she met Gandhiji several times and once even agreed to wear khaddar, and spin every day, which she did for some months, fundamentally she differed from the Congress under the Gandhian leadership.

# 10. “BETAJ BADSHAH KI JAI”

Mrs Besant’s feeling against Gandhiji was noticeable when the latter came to Simla for his first famous interview with the Viceroy. Gandhiji was residing at Shanti Kuti. The entire slopes round Shanti Kuti were crowded by the simple folk from the hills. That so many hundreds could flock round to receive *darshan* of a personality of whom they knew but by hearsay and whose service in India had just commenced, was indeed noteworthy. They had instinctively understood that he was the leader of the masses. Unlike the leadership of the previous generation which had contented itself with addressing the Government and trying to convince the officials, this one had a different appeal for the masses. Gandhiji spoke the language of the common man, the language of love and sacrifice, and practised what he preached, saying “Swaraj is in our hands.” In 1921, however, Gandhiji’s fame was not so great. But on the

streets of Simla, and at a public meeting held at Idga he was hailed by crowds with *Betaj Badshah ki Jai!* (Victory to the uncrowned King!) I described this incident and the crowds following Gandhiji, in one of my newsletters published in the *Bombay Chronicle*. Mrs Annie Besant could not contain herself on reading it and wrote a signed editorial in *New India* (Madras) questioning the veracity of my statement and stating to her reading public that the crowds did not follow Gandhiji and that there was no laudatory cry. Her vituperation of both Gandhiji and me are still on record in the files of *New India*. I had but mentioned what had been witnessed by hundreds of people. But political rivalry sometimes blurs the vision. Several months later when I met Mrs. Besant in Madras and told her how unjust she had been to me personally by writing like that under her own name, she expressed her regrets to me, but she repeated that the policy of boycott and the programme of non-co-operation advocated by Gandhiji could do no good to the country. But politically conscious India was preparing for a different set-up. It had been captured by Gandhian ideas. *Young India* started by Gandhiji sold more copies than the combined totals of several newspapers in India. There was not only a new thought but a new language in newspaper writing, and what he wrote was the best in political thought and finest in journalistic writing. No editor could escape being influenced by Gandhiji's writings. When the Viceroy of India himself sent for Gandhiji for an interview in order to come to terms with him for the working of the Constitution, and also because of the intended visit of the Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor), there was a wave of rapt expectation and feeling that the real leader of the masses had been found at last, and there would be a settlement between the Government and the people. The terms were offered through Mr Jamnadas Dwarkadas, then a young member of the Assembly, and a disciple of Mrs Annie Besant who was in touch with the Viceroy's House at Cal-

cutta during the Christmas week. The offer was advertised at the time of the Ahmedabad session of the Congress as effecting Provincial Autonomy. I was present at the Congress session as representative of the Associated Press and of Reuters. On getting a telegram from Delhi giving the substance of the Viceroy's offer I sought an interview with Gandhiji shortly after 9 p.m. He did not consult anyone about it and gave his reply immediately ! He rejected the offer saying: "I see no change of heart." This was the first time he used the words "change of heart"—an expression which he repeated often with reference to the British Government's policy. I asked : "Mahatmaji, can't you say what would constitute a change of heart ?"

Gandhiji replied : "What I have given by way of reply to the telegram you have received, is adequate for the occasion." There was no choice. I went out and filed the message, though I felt that perhaps it would have been better if Gandhiji had specifically stated his counter terms. Anyhow, the message was broadcast throughout the world. Lord Reading, I was told, received it with deep disappointment, for it was a warning to him that India's great leader disapproved of the Viceroy's arrangement to invite the Prince of Wales before a proper political settlement was arrived at. Moderate India, always critical of Gandhiji, spoke with some derision of the "failure of Gandhi" to obtain Provincial Autonomy in 1921 itself.

## 11. FIRST KHADDAR CONGRESS

The Ahmedabad session of the Congress, under the *de facto* leadership of Gandhiji, marked a definite change in the course of the history of the Congress, not only politically but even materially. There were no chairs or tables for the delegates. For the first time we had all to squat

on the floor. People wore khaddar clothes and were spinning; the delegates were lodged in tents made of khaddar—all of this happening not far from where weaving mills worked rapidly turning out cloth in bales. It was a challenge to the very machine, and Gandhiji by his own example symbolized it. One journalist in a despatch to his paper truly remarked about the set-up of the Congress arrangements; "Khaddar to the right, khaddar to the left, khaddar all around." But the most attractive spot in the Congress camp was where a ten foot charkha had been kept with the inscription in Urdu reading as follows: "Dushman ka dushman: dost ka dost" (Enemy to enemy; and friend to friend). Standing in front of it, Maulana Mohamad Ali explained the significance of it to a group of journalists. The Muslim vied with the Hindu; everyone was imbued with patriotic fervour; there was no communal feeling at all. Mr Mohamad Ali Jinnah was also present at Ahmedabad, attending the Congress session for the last time. He was perhaps the only individual to be seen in foreign clothes, complete with collar and tie. As in previous years, the Muslim League held its session at Ahmedabad in the very same pandal where the Congress had held its session. It was the practice of the Congress to hold its session in the day and the League to hold its deliberations in the same pandal at night. This arrangement suited everybody, in that the Muslims could confine their League activities to their religious questions like Khilafat, mosques, etc., while joining with the rest of India on bigger political all-India issues. But the Gandhian ascendancy in the counsels of the Congress and the acceptance of his programme at the Ahmedabad session meant a complete break not only with Moderate India but also to some extent with Muslim India at the time because of the attitude which Mr Jinnah chose to adopt. Of course, Khilafat had not yet been settled and Muslim leaders like Mohamad Ali, Shaukat Ali and Hasarat Mohani were in the Congress till some years

later, until they too felt it necessary for one reason or another to eliminate themselves from the Congress fold.

A word about the proceedings of the Ahmedabad Congress itself : The most important resolution related to the programme of what was called the "Triple Boycott"—boycott of Legislative Councils, courts and educational institutions. In other words, it meant non-co-operation with the British system of government. Gandhiji moved this resolution, speaking in Hindustani and later, for the benefit of those who did not know the 'lingua franca of India' as he called it, in English. The audience was stirred when in the course of his speech he said: "This is not an arrogant challenge to Government; but it is a challenge to a Government that is enthroned on arrogance. I am a man of peace. I want peace. But I do not want the peace that you find in the stone. I do not want the peace that you find in the grave. I want that peace that is embedded in the human breast that is exposed to the arrows of the whole world." It was in such an atmosphere that the resolution was adopted. A new wave of political enthusiasm was aroused and everywhere lawyers, educationists and even a few Government servants were boycotting their respective professions. The most conspicuous examples were the resignation by S. Srinivasa Iyengar of the Advocate-Generalship in Madras, and by Bhulabhai Desai in Bombay, and the giving up of law practice by Pandit Motilal Nehru in Allahabad, C. R. Das in Calcutta and C. Rajagopalachari in Madras. Several other figures in the legal and political firmament followed likewise, and banded themselves now under the leadership of Gandhiji, armed with the gospel of non-co-operation against the British and the slogan, "Struggle to the finish".

## 12. INDIA'S CAPITAL CITY

The old Imperial Legislative Council was still alive. It held two sessions before it died and the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were inaugurated. It was a period of changes from one constitution to another. Apart from Pandit Malaviya, the best speaker was Sir Surendranath Banerjee. His speech was more flowery than factual. But in those days, to the Indian mind lost in admiration of the beauty of the English language, words and expressions counted a great deal. Though the officials cared little or nothing for such utterances, the Britishers appreciated the adaptability of the Indian to their language.

The proceedings of the Council were conducted in a leisurely way. One of the best debates was held in the Delhi session. It was on a resolution moved by Sir B. N. Sarma, still as a non-official member, for a Committee to decide the location of the capital of India. (Sir B. N. Sarma, a member of the Legislative Council, was appointed as Revenue Member of the Executive Council. It was believed to be a reward for the speech that he had delivered at the Amritsar session of the Congress. His was the lone voice raised against the "Chelmsford Must Go" Resolution that was adopted by the Congress on the motion of Syed Hussain.)

The public mind had not reconciled itself to the change made in the time of Lord Hardinge in favour of Delhi. Money was no doubt being spent in New Delhi to the tune of crores. But it was well known that it was at best a six months centre and never could attract people in the summer months. Why then this waste of public money? Because of an arbitrary decision taken in London for reasons best known to the British Government? With such arguments being freely bandied in public, the resolution that was moved by Sir B. N. Sarma attracted attention. Sir Surendranath Banerjee was the star speaker of the debate. He got the best chance to hit



out at Government for their decision to deprive Calcutta of the glory of being the capital of India. He said among other things (I am quoting from memory): "My Lord, it used to be said of the kings of Castille and Aragon that whenever they were confronted with problems of a difficult nature, they used to consult the venerable oracles of their revered ancestors. In regard to this question—the location of the capital of India—I consulted my oracle: my constituency. And what did they say? They all said with one unanimous voice—and not a single exception, My Lord: 'Go and vote for Calcutta'." Some of the members of the Council laughed at this stage, and noticing this, Sir Surendranath Banerjee warmed up and proceeded more eloquently: "My Lord, I notice some of my friends smiling and others laughing. Let me tell my friends that Calcutta has been the nursery of British institutions and the cradle of the Indo-British civilization. And after all, what could Delhi boast of except as the tomb of Empires?"

It was in this strain that Surendranath Banerjee used to speak. The fate of the resolution itself was, of course, a foregone conclusion. The debate was a failure but I have given a glimpse of the sort of speech-making that used to be indulged in in those days. But even then there was Mr Jinnah, who spoke as he did all through—the only person who spoke in short staccato sentences with brevity and preciseness, with no attempt at flourishes or rhetoric but with a smart display of the essentials of the question. As a result Jinnah was most effective even among these orators. He maintained this characteristic throughout the last three decades. Some might say that there was never any profundity behind Jinnah's speeches, but he always had a penetrating insight into the mind of the opposite party. That counts a good deal in a debate. Mr Jinnah was once described in the Assembly by Mr Rangachari as the best surgeon of the House. And what a specialist in amputation he later proved!

As regards the capital of India, this question cropped up several times in the Legislative Assembly in the early period of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. It was raised once on a resolution by T. V. Seshagiri Iyer, and again on the travelling expenses of the Executive Councillors to Simla. Dr Sir Hari Singh Gour and others participated in the debates. But the official mind had already been made up. So Delhi remained the Capital, and during the Second World War it expanded to a size undreamt of even by those who decided in its favour as the Capital. Out of over thirty crores of tax-payers' money was evolved this wondrous cradle of resurgent India, this nursery of Indian political institutions.

### 13. JINNAH'S LAST APPEARANCE AT CONGRESS

At a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held immediately after the close of the Ahmedabad session, two things happened which were noteworthy. When the delegates were fixing the date for the next session, Mr Aney got up and queried: "Mahatmaji, what is all this? In one breath you say, 'Swaraj within a year and we must have it', and in another you fix a date for the next year's Congress session. It means that you are not serious about your one-year programme for Swaraj." Gandhiji smiled and said that there was substance in Mr Aney's point of view. It was, therefore, decided to leave this question to the Working Committee's decision in the next year. This shows that the Gandhian plan of Swaraj within a year was winning much sympathy from the people, and whatever the result, the political programme received a definite momentum.

It was at this very meeting—as I was getting out of the pandal to book a message at the telegraph office in the Congress camp—that Mr Jinnah, sitting almost at the entrance, stopped me, and asked: "Well, Iyengar, what do

you make of all this show? At any rate, what place have I in it?" That was the last we saw of Jinnah among Congressmen in a Congress gathering, even as a visitor. It was as if he bade good-bye to the Gandhian conception of freedom and decided to work in his own way for securing the leadership of the Muslim League. We all know how in this task he met with many difficulties from Sir Mohamad Shafi who had a separate All-India Muslim Conference supported by H. H. the Aga Khan, and also by the other sections of the Muslims like the Majlis-e-Ahrar, and the Jamiat-ul-ulema-Hind.

Meanwhile, Ahmedabad had launched the programme of triple boycott of legislative councils, law courts, and educational institutions. This programme immediately checkmated the reforms of the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution. It was boycotted everywhere by Congressmen. And amusing incidents occurred in the fever of elections all over India. In Delhi, right under the nose of Lord Reading, there was no candidate forthcoming from the Congress side. One Shaikh Abdul Majid, a *Halwai* owning a big sweetmeat shop in Delhi, was proposed. The way he advertised his own candidature was by placards put up on both sides of donkeys that were paraded throughout Chandni Chowk. This was obviously his friends' idea of ridiculing the constitution. He was elected a member of the new Assembly, a "distinguished democrat", representing the most important area in the whole of India, the voters of which included the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief, members of Government and several other responsible people. Not only did nobody question the representative character of Shaikh Abdul Majid in the Legislative Assembly when it was inaugurated, but a tribute was paid to him in a very interesting debate on a non-official resolution. The recommendation was that the members of the Legislative Assembly should, in status and emoluments, enjoy equality with the members of the Council of State, i.e. they should, like the members of the Council

of State, be called 'Honourables' and be given the right to reserve railway compartments. There was warm and hearty support from all sections of the House. But there was also a fly in the ointment. Mr Eardley Norton from Madras got up to oppose it—shocking the House. He could not understand this demand for equality which after all was for empty honours. He said among other things: "Sir, I claim this to be the most representative Chamber of India and I am glad to be a member of such a distinguished and august body. For, at one end of the House you find the Noble Baronet [Lord Rawlinson] and at the other an artist in pastry [Shaikh Abdul Majid Halvai] representing the Delhi Constituency. I oppose the Resolution because I did not want a mere fictitious claim. As a matter of fact, I hate to strut about as the unrecognized son of a fictitious Peer . . . ."

#### 14. INDIANIZATION OF THE ARMY

Almost the first task of the Central Assembly, when it was reconstituted under the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution, was to concentrate on two questions: (1) Indianization of the Army, and (2) Constitutional Reforms. The Government published the Report by Lord Esher on the reorganization of the Indian Army. The Assembly was not satisfied with the progress made. The cry was taken up not so much by the martial classes of the Punjab or elsewhere, as by the so-called non-martial classes of South India, headed by the mildest of Moderates Sir Sivaswami Iyer, and assisted by members from Bengal and elsewhere. When Sir Sivaswami Iyer spoke on the Esher Committee Report, it was not a condemnation—for he never used any condemnatory language all his life—but a ruthless analysis of the policy and a presentation of the problem in the most unchallengeable manner. And his demand was moderate—Indianization

within twenty-five years. His speech was so impressive that it led to the appointment of a Committee for the Indianization of the Army under Sir Andrew Skeen, who was the Chief of General Staff in India. When this Committee was constituted, Pandit Motilal Nehru had come to the Assembly as a Swarajist, and as a rebel from the Gandhian conception of the boycott of Legislative Councils. Mr Jinnah was also a member, and so were many others, of the Committee. I remember how Motilal Nehru and Jinnah laboured day after day, to convince the Army Chiefs that Indians could be trained to become able officers. They put forward the demand to establish an 'Indian Sandhurst', but there was no Indian Sandhurst established until about 15 years later at Dehra Dun, which I had occasion to visit only in 1942. One day, even before the publication of the Skeen Committee Report with its modest recommendations, Mr Jinnah was so proud of his Committee's achievement that in a conversation with me, in the lobby, he remarked: "You will find how much we have done. It is really constructive work for Swaraj, and if the Government only give effect to it sincerely, then we shall have Swaraj within 15 years." After considerable delay the Report was published. But it was shelved by Government for some years. Frequent references had to be made in the Assembly, by representatives of the people, during the debates on Army expenditure, and much pressure had to be exerted before an Indian Sandhurst could be established at Dehra Dun as the first step to training Indians for officer ranks in the Army. And it was not till the Second World War that they realized how woefully backward they were. A different turn was given to the whole question and everybody became an Emergency Commissioned Officer after just a few months of hurried training. That was the policy with the British. As Mr Srinivasa Sastri once remarked in the Council of State: "They are as good at promises as at postponements. They

will promise the least and postpone to the last.”

However, one portion of the evidence tendered before the Skeen Committee, which I watched, gave me the greatest pleasure as a vegetarian. A Rajput appeared as witness and he was a strict vegetarian. Objections had been advanced by the martial classes that those who enter the Army must take to meat in order to build up their strength. This witness differed completely from that trend of opinion and said: “Sir, it is absolutely unnecessary for those who join the Army to take to meat. Medical science has fully proved that there is more protein content in *chana* and in *uradka dhal* than in meat. We Rajputs are martial because of that *chana* and *uradka dhal*. Therefore, let not the Army be reserved for the meat-eaters. It must be thrown open to all.” This of course had very little bearing on the question of recruitment as such, for that was actually a matter of policy; but it does show the misconception that prevailed about the quality of recruits to the Indian Army. The Second World War, however, conclusively proved that there could be no discrimination between martial and non-martial classes in India.

But before I close the subject of the Indian Army and the establishment of the ‘Indian Sandhurst’, I may as well refer to the passing of a distinguished soldier, Lord Rawlinson, which took place in Delhi at the Hindu Rao Hospital. Lord Rawlinson was seriously ill and there was not much hope that he would recover. In accordance with the usual practice, many newspapers had written obituary notices and were only waiting for the bare news to be officially announced. Only newspaper staffs can realize the breathless excitement that such situations create. Lord Rawlinson’s condition was speedily worsening. When the usual bulletins that were issued hourly, reporting his condition, had been stopped,

the waiting journalists became suspicious.

But how could any one of them have the nerve to telegraph their suspicions to their newspapers? For aught one knew, it might be that His Excellency was showing sudden signs of improvement. I too was wearying of the interminable waiting. But as I was looking around, I found an individual with a very sardonic face emerging leisurely from the C-in-C's bungalow. Apparently, he was some minor functionary in the household. Whatever he was, he could not contain within himself the joke he seemed to be enjoying. So, after a rapid glance at me, to make sure that he would not get into trouble, he broke out in Hindustani: "The Jangi Sahib died an hour ago, but still the flag is not lowered!"

This was great fun for him but to me it was great news. I rushed to the Telegraph Office and flashed the news to London and all parts of India. After some considerable time, I found several journalists, who had been waiting at the C-in-C's house, running to their respective offices with the official announcement that the C-in-C was dead. Their faces visibly fell as I told them I was ahead of them by a clear hour.

Lord Rawlinson was not only a great soldier; he was a sincere and straightforward man, maintaining these characteristics in speech, and I have never found him faltering for words or expressions. He always spoke with great and obvious earnestness. Lord Rawlinson's straightforward manner of addressing the popular representatives of the Assembly was unique in the history of parliamentary addresses in India. No one else in the long line of Commanders-in-Chief has ever equalled him, not even Sir William Birdwood, who often used to break into Hindustani, to show his great love for Indians and Indian soldiers. When Lord Rawlinson said, "Give me men and I shall train them," he meant it, but he was not given the men. The few who passed through his hands emerged with excellent training

and a deep appreciation of him.

His death when it took place in Hindu Rao Hospital, was mourned by all including the legislators whose regard and affection for him was very genuine. The men trained at his instance at Sandhurst and as a result of his policy in Dehra Dun are today leaders of the Army in Independent India from General Cariappa downwards.

## 15. MUDDIMAN COMMITTEE

One other question that came up immediately after the inauguration of the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution was that the constitution itself was not adequate to meet the needs of the people, and must be scrapped in favour of a wider scheme of reforms. The debate on the motion initiated by Babu Jadunath Mazumdar was extremely interesting, drawing in many stalwarts of the house. That there was anxiety on the part of the Government not to oppose the resolution but to have the issue examined, was clear from the appointment of a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Muddiman who was then a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. In fact, the atmosphere in those days was one of placating the Opposition, of course mainly because there was the pressure of the non-co-operation party from outside. Among the star speakers in those days was Mr Jamnadas Dwarakadas, the very person through whom Lord Reading was trying to negotiate unsuccessfully with Gandhiji from Calcutta. Mrs Besant was his spiritual and political Guru, and she backed this move as a new responsive co-operationist and, therefore, indirectly against the Congress which had launched the triple boycott.

The Muddiman Committee was a fairly long drawn out affair. Dyarchy came in for a measure of criticism which no other constitution and no other part of the constitution



ever received. The severest critic was Mr (later Sir) C. Y. Chintamani. Let me here recall an interesting incident. While I was on the *Leader*, there used to be what were called "Editorial Council meetings" off and on. Here was a report which in the Provincial sphere had introduced the vicious principle of Dyarchy. No one knew how it would work. But the flowery language in which this report was couched was such that it delighted the class of politicians accustomed to the mid-Victorian style of writing. Actually, it was Sir William Marris (who was the Reforms Commissioner at the time and later the Governor of Assam) who drafted the report. No doubt, as a specimen of English writing it was a great document. The *Pioneer*, which used to be published from Allahabad in those days, published the entire report in one single issue, meriting an appreciative paragraph at the hands of Sir C. Y. Chintamani in the *Leader*. My first impressions were formed on the lengthy summary supplied by the Associated Press. I wondered how, in the Provincial sphere, there could be any sharp division of functions, especially with Finance in the control of an Executive Councillor who was not responsible to the Legislature. I felt that this scheme for reforms was impracticable. When, therefore, Chintamani had called a conference of the editorial staff, I was not unwilling to take part in it. Chintamani delivered almost a lecture at that meeting, summarizing the report, and stating finally, that the scheme should be supported though, here and there, he had subjected some passages to scathing criticism. In essence he did not condemn dyarchy because, in his opinion, it was a half-way house towards Provincial Autonomy. And when Chintamani pronounced his opinion all my other colleagues agreed without demur. But although I was the juniormost, I did not hesitate to strike a discordant "No". I said: "This cannot work. I do not know Lionel Curtis but I know human nature well enough to say that such a hide-bound constitution, which has within it the

seeds of constant irritation, is bound to crack and fail." Chintamani did not like my views, and remarked: "Then you should be in the Gandhian camp."

The *Leader* supported the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme vigorously, and criticized only those portions which did not matter. Its editorials were the admiration of Nainital and Simla. The bulk of politically awakened India, however, adopted a different attitude, in favour of the Gandhian policy of non-co-operation. The Muslims, then still suffering from the Khilafat wrong, were inclined to support the Hindu non-co-operators, but the more the country was non-co-operative with the Reforms scheme, the more vigorous were the editorials of Chintamani in favour of it. I still remember a public meeting held in Nainital where Chintamani, after giving complete support to the basis of the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme, remarked: "I speak in this strain not because I have sold my body and my soul to my patrons at Simla or Nainital, but because, convinced as I am in the essential soundness of its policy, and more so in the good intentions of the author [Mr Montagu], I feel we can make the maximum use of the powers granted to Indians to the best advantage of the country."

For myself, from the *Leader* to the *Independent* and from the *Independent* to the Associated Press in Delhi was but a step and a quick step at that. Now, I was handling the Muddiman Committee at work for the Press in India and abroad. One of the early witnesses was C. Y. Chintamani himself. He had been so enamoured of the dyarchy constitutional scheme that the Britishers did not fail to get him to work it in the U. P. He became the Minister for Education and Local Self-government. He did very good work in both these spheres of service. But it was a short-lived career. The Director of Public Instruction in the Province was

Sir Claude de la Fosse. He had direct access to the Governor, which right he exercised to the fullest advantage quite often. Here was a Minister, a born critic of the foibles of the constitution, but now trying to work it with goodwill and the best of intentions. When he heard that Sir Claude de la Fosse was having his own way with the Governor on important matters affecting the policy of the Education Department, even the moderate in Chintamani rebelled. Correspondence ensued between him and the Governor, interviews followed, and failing to get a satisfactory assurance on the point, Chintamani resigned. This was but one major grievance of the many that Chintamani incorporated in the memorandum that he presented before the Muddiman Committee. The chief defect of this arch-Moderate was that he used the language of extremism, whether it was criticism or support. Now he was at Simla, standing as a witness before the Muddiman Committee, with a document which could only be described as that of an iconoclast. He damned the dyarchic constitution in a manner which only he could do so well. A master of sarcasm, Chintamani was pungent and unaccommodating. When I called on him at Peterhoff, where he was staying with Sir B. N. Sarma, the Education Member of the Government of India at the time, he handed me a copy of the memorandum inscribed with his compliments. When I read it during the night before the evidence of Chintamani, I was reminded of his editorial conference in the *Leader* office when he had dismissed me as only fit for the Gandhian camp. And the oral evidence that he tendered was even more disturbing to the official world in Simla, and correspondingly gave strength to the elbow of the non-co-operators in the country. During the lunch hour I had a few minutes with him, and when I reminded him of the editorial council meeting and said how pleased I was at his change of attitude about the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme in spite of his earlier enthusiasm, he was gracious enough to remark:

"I confess I was wrong. I thought these English people would give some freedom to the ministers under the constitution. But after the Prince of Wales left India and the non-co-operators were successfully suppressed there was a complete change in the attitude adopted towards the Indian ministers." This significant observation I have never forgotten, for the essence of the working of any constitution is not merely the constitution itself, but the spirit and the atmosphere in which it is worked. No wonder Gandhiji with his deep moral insight had looked into the offer of Lord Reading and found it lacking in any signs of "Change of heart".

Though a Moderate, Chintamani was a rebel in his own way. After he left the Ministry he went to Bombay where he was appointed Editor of the *Indian Daily Mail* owned by a Parsee baronet. Only a few days passed and there was a clash. The proprietor wanted him to advocate a policy in favour of the capitalists which clashed against labour. Chintamani laid down his pen and sent in his resignation. Returning to Allahabad he found himself once again in the more congenial atmosphere of the *Leader*.

Before the Muddiman Committee, not only Chintamani but many others who had been Ministers, gave expression to more or less similar views. The Committee did not recommend the scrapping of the dyarchical form of government, but suggested minor measures of reforms intended to smoothen its working. The Committee's proceedings were covered by Durga Das and myself for the Associated Press and Reuters as their News Editors at Delhi and Simla, and for several Indian-edited newspapers as their Special Correspondents. The attitude of the political thinkers of India was to ridicule the entire constitution with a view to setting up a new one. Even Moderate newspapers including the *Leader*, once again edited by Chintamani, were uncompromising critics of the constitution. No wonder our messages as special correspondents got the widest display in the Press.

The Government of India at that time apparently did not like that representatives of the Associated Press should also be engaged as Special Correspondents of newspapers. But they did not openly quarrel with us as did Sir James Grigg when he came as the Finance member. Sir Alexander was of a tolerant disposition and allowed free expression of views before the Committee. But in his report he had one paragraph animadverting the reporting of the proceedings by a section of the Press, apparently meaning the Indian section. Mr Edwin Haward, who was the representative of the *Pioneer* acknowledged to be the organ of the I. C. S. in India, did his best to neutralize the effects produced by our reports, but to little or no avail. However, even the Muddiman Report was in a way shelved, and no action was taken on its recommendations in the excitement of the non-cooperation and the boycott of British institutions that was in full swing with the stimulating slogan of "Swaraj within a year".

Before I close on the Muddiman Report a reference to Sir Alexander himself would be apposite in illustrating the atmosphere in which the constitution was being worked in those days. A section of Congressmen came in as Swarajists headed by Pandit Motilal Nehru, but not with the approval of the Congress as an organization. Whatever they did had a glamour about it, for they were there with Gandhi caps on, with the Gandhian conception of freedom, but not with the Gandhian methods. It was perhaps a half-way house or even some sort of a dyarchy in the working of the Gandhian conception that these people advocated. Mr C. R. Das, with his Swarajist followers in Bengal, churning the politics of that Province and influencing Swarajists all over the country and Pandit Motilal Nehru as the Leader of the Swarajist Party in the Central Assembly, were engaged actively, not in uprooting the Congress organization, but in seeking methods by which the British could be influenced to accept the urgency

for a change in the Constitution. The Muddiman Committee Report had become a farce. But when it cropped up in the Central Assembly, Muddiman who was still the Home Member effectively retorted: "If you have to live by the ford, you will have to make friends with the crocodiles." That was the spirit in which the Britishers viewed the problem in respect of the Indian demand for freedom: "Come and settle with the British. The Britishers are not going to settle with you. We have made up our mind."

But a word of tribute must be paid to Sir Alexander Muddiman himself. He was a bachelor full of mirth and gaiety, socially very charming, prone to a certain degree of levity in the lobbies, but, within the Chamber, never minimizing the efficiency of the British method of administration and always defending it against all tempests, whether from the Swarajists within the Chamber or the Congressmen outside it. His appointment as the Governor of the U. P. was welcomed by even the Swarajists in those days. But he did not live long to enjoy it and he passed away at Nainital.

## 16. LORD HAILEY

After Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Membership was taken over by Sir Malcolm Hailey. With a Curzonian flair for eloquence and hard work, he adhered to a 'No change' policy, setting up rival organizations against the principal one. I remember how Aman Sabhas grew like mushrooms in those days. Even in the office of the Associated Press we were inundated with reports of meetings of Aman Sabhas which were never held. Lord Hailey's method of personal approach was very different from Muddiman's. The latter got round individuals and the Opposition leaders in the lobbies. Hailey did nothing of the kind; he could depend on his files and defend with his eloquence. It was not

language alone; it was the conviction of British superiority in all things. The glamour the English language had for Indians had not disappeared. One such occasion was when he moved to support a Bill aiming at the removal of racial discrimination in criminal trials—a measure for which the credit must go to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru when he was Law Member of the Government of India. Hailey said: “Of all things in the world a spirit of mutual toleration and goodwill is the most essential thing. Capture it while you may, and enshrine it imperishably and unalterably on your Statute Book.” He was not only a good speaker, but a brilliant debator and even his retorts were a source of great delight. One day, in the course of a debate on Reforms, he was quoting from clippings of speeches reported to have been delivered by V. J. Patel against the British Government. They were considered seditious, but no action was taken. When therefore these cuttings were hurled against him by Sir Malcolm Hailey as the Home Member, Mr Patel as the Deputy Leader of the Swaraj Party (seated next to Pandit Motilal Nehru), got up and queried: “Wherefrom is the Home Member reading all this at my expense?” Sir Malcolm Hailey trounced him with the retort: “Sir, my Department has many faults, but certainly it does not produce the *Bombay Chronicle*!” But in another portion of the same debate Diwan Chaman Lal got the better of Hailey, for while alluding to the speech of Chaman Lal, Hailey described it as containing but “the juvenile adjectives of my friend over there”. Immediately, Chaman Lal got up and questioned, on a point of order: “Sir, can any Member take advantage of his age?” It was a neat and crushing retort which even Sir Malcolm Hailey could not help applauding.

Sir Charles Innes was another good speaker, but of the most matter-of-fact variety. His was a torrential eloquence studded plentifully with facts and figures. It almost looked as if he had memorized his speech but that was never the

case. As the Commerce Member of the Government of India, he had to face tariff problems. Numerous industries like steel, cotton, silk, paper, etc. were coming up for protection on the basis of the reports of the Tariff Board set up in pursuance of the Fiscal Commission's recommendations. Personally, Sir Charles Innes would have liked the 'ma-bap' rule with not even the Indian element in the Legislative Council. Sir Charles had no faith in the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution under which he rose to the position of an Executive Councillor. This was evident towards the end of his Councillorship when in a political debate, he intervened: "Sir," he said, "let me remind the House that the blood of the Britisher is visible in every stone in India." He was a die-hard of the worst type. And in order to preserve India for Britain he went to Burma as Governor and split that country into factions, setting up one section of the people against another, so that riots became a common feature.

Muddiman, Hailey and Innes were all Imperialists; they only differed in shade. But their motto was efficiency. They never allowed it to be upset by the talk of freedom. The more Indians talked of Swaraj the more convinced were they of their own efficiency and the capacity of the British administration to meet such situations. But the Home Members who followed them, though believers in bureaucratic efficiency, were themselves not as competent to expound and maintain that imperialistic conception. Often-times they suffered reverses in the Central Legislature which affected their morale. Only the Secretariat worked on the traditional model tacitly supported by the military. To this class belonged Crerar, Haig, Hallett and Mudie. An exception was Sir Reginald Maxwell who during his term as Home Member, had to meet with extraordinary situations but met them with complete self-possession. He was not a politician in any sense, and he never created parties within the House to meet his opponents; his methods were straight;



his arguments from the Government point of view, firm and his conclusions were his own convictions. Then came Mudie. His appointment was traced to the great influence of Sir Maurice Hallett, the star of the I.C.S. firmament, then occupying the *gaddi* in the U.P. He tried to get round the Assembly by influencing the back-benchers but the times were moving fast.

## 17. THE RAINEY TOUCH

Another of his kind, though not Home Member, was the Commerce Member of Government, Sir George Rainey. There was at least some savour of humanity in his utterances and through this factor he sought to influence the Opposition to his way of thinking. Though his speeches were often on dry subjects like steel and cotton, he could bring to bear upon his hearers a degree of personal influence stressing the need for collaboration rather than conflict between India and Britain. The sympathetic vein of his speeches popularized them. His best speech was on the death of Pandit Motilal Nehru: "He had a personality which impressed itself on the most unobservant. Eminent as a lawyer, eminent as a speaker and in the first rank as a political leader, he could have taken the foremost place wherever he might be, whether within these walls or outside them. The quickness of his intellect, his skill in debate, his adroitness as a tactician and his strength of purpose rendered him a formidable adversary in controversy. An endearing courtesy, a ready sense of humour, freedom from malice and bitterness, and a wide and deep culture rendered him unrivalled as a host and the most charming of companions. We shall not again see in this House his well-remembered figure, but we shall often recall that exquisite fitness of attire which aptly symbolized the clean fighter and the great gentleman and

that impressive face, deeply lined and careworn, on which character and intellect were so deeply imprinted."

A word about an incident connecting me with Sir George Rainey. I had met him for the first time at Jamshedpur when he was Chairman of the first Tariff Board conducting the first enquiry into protection for the steel industry. The Members of the Board were Sir P. P. Ginwala and Prof. V. G. Kale. The Press in India was interested in the proceedings because for the first time, the policy of discriminating protection embodied in the Fiscal Commission's report was being examined in order to determine the establishment of a key industry in India. One day Sir George Rainey wanted to issue a Press Communique and consulted me about it. I lent a helping hand in its drafting which he approved. Years later, when he became Commerce Member and the Leader of the House in the Assembly, Mr K. C. Roy, my Chief, collapsed in the Assembly buildings at Simla on the 7th September 1931 due to cerebral haemorrhage. The next day there was an obituary reference to Mr Roy. Sir George Rainey wanted a few points for a speech which I happened to furnish. Then came the question of nominating a successor in the place of K. C. Roy. Sir George Rainey had formed a favourable opinion of me. I understood that Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer who was then the Law Member suggested my name. But Sir Fazli Hussain, the Education Member, wanted to put in Chaudhri Lalehand, a Jat, who was running a small vernacular magazine at Rohtak. The principal measure to be hammered on the anvil of the Assembly was the Press Emergency Bill. The Upper India Journalists' Association, of which I was Secretary, had given expression to its views against it. Sir Fazli Hussain had equipped himself with a clipping containing the views of the Association on the Bill. When, therefore, my name was proposed by Sir George Rainey, backed by Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer and

others, he had only to present the clipping and there was an end of my nomination. Personally, I was glad that I was not selected, because I was single-handed in running the work of the Associated Press after K. C. Roy's death, particularly as Usha Nath Sen and Durga Das had gone abroad that summer.



## **PART II**



## 1. THE FIRST PHASE OF N. C. O.

It has been my privilege as a journalist to have watched the growth of the Non-co-operation Movement within the Congress at its various sessions, and in the Legislatures at the Centre, and in some Provinces and during the off-season in the country generally. The seed of non-co-operation did not germinate in the atmosphere of the Congress at the annual session held at Nagpur in 1920 under the presidency of C. Vijayaraghavachariar. Indeed, Vijayaraghavachariar looked upon the Gandhian policy and programme as one likely to disintegrate the Congress. He said: "I believe that a crisis has now been reached in the history of the Congress and the present session may be rightly deemed to be the Thermopylæ in the history of India—at any rate, in the history of the Indian National Congress . . . . Our fate just now lies chiefly in the hands of two men: Mr Montagu and Mahatma Gandhi. You will frame a message to Mr Montagu saying, 'Pray, do,' and I shall frame a message to Mahatma Gandhi 'Pray do not'. In the welcome response to each message lies the salvation of our country in the main just now . . . The Congress has to tell the Coalition Ministry of Great Britain that at the end of the War it was a great pity that they did not act towards India as Abraham Lincoln did at the end of the American Civil War."

But in spite of the President's advice the resolution adopted by the Congress at the open session was in favour of the triple boycott scheme of non-co-operation proposed by Gandhiji, leaving the discretion for the enforcement of it to the All India Congress Committee, in the mean time preparing the country for it.

The response of the country to the resolutions was widespread. Legislators, lawyers, professors and students all joined in with magnificent fervour. There were cases of Government servants tendering their resignations in

order to participate in the struggle for freedom. Parallel courts, parallel schools and even parallel post offices were either established or being set up. Respect for the British system of institutions was shaken; all that the British Government did was to adopt a semblance of responsive co-operation in the Central Legislature. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had only to suggest the formation of a committee to repeal the Press Act, and a committee was appointed. N. M. Samarth, a liberal politician from Bombay, had only to suggest the removal of racial discrimination in criminal trials, and immediately, another committee was appointed. But this manner of professing goodwill did not alter the attitude of the country that had been worked up to a spirit of boycott of almost every thing British—of British goods and of British Institutions. Yet, the Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor) whom Lord Reading had invited, arrived in Bombay. But riots broke out on the very streets of Bombay and Gandhiji himself had to complain: "The Swaraj I have seen these days stinks in my nostrils." The longest stay of the Prince of Wales was in Delhi where he tried to create a favourable impression with his gracious friendliness at public functions. As soon as the Prince of Wales sailed from the shores of India, political troubles arose originating from the Government, the first offensive being the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi was staying at his Ashram at Sabarmati near Ahmedabad. He relinquished that place only when he left on his famous march to Dandi in 1930, promising not to return until Swaraj was obtained. However, soon after the Prince of Wales had left, rumours were thick of the impending arrest of Gandhiji. Mr Roy, the Chief of the Associated Press, came to know that the news of Gandhiji's arrest, when it was effected, would be suppressed by the Government for a time. The object was to prevent any simultaneous out-breaks in the country. We had an Editorial Council to consider how to obtain the news from Ahmedabad



promptly and publish it all over in order to preserve the reputation of our agency. I threw out a suggestion and took upon myself the responsibility of implementing it. If our Ahmedabad correspondent's message was not to be transmitted according to instructions that might be given to the Telegraph or District authorities, there was nothing to prevent my getting a private telegram if expressed in an *ad hoc* code. There was Manilal Kothari, the President of the B. B. & C. I. Railway Union, residing in Ahmedabad at Sabarmati Ashram. I wrote to him to send me to my private address a telegram reading, 'Ganesh ill' (meaning Gandhiji arrested) as soon as Gandhiji was arrested. The plan worked well and the telegram came within a remarkably short time after the arrest. From Delhi we were able to splash the news all over the world.

This was Gandhiji's first detention. Yet there were no violent demonstrations against it.

All were not of one mind within the Congress with regard to that item of the Non-co-operation Movement which recommended the boycott of the Legislative Councils. This evoked vigorous expression from C. R. Das at the session of the Congress at Gaya held in December 1922. Mahatma Gandhi did not attend the Congress because he had been jailed. C. R. Das gave a new turn to the Non-co-operation Movement in respect of the Council boycott programme when he advised the Congress to boycott the Councils more effectively from within. "The Reform Councils are really a mask which the bureaucracy has assumed. I consider it our clear duty to tear this mask off." He had a great supporter in Pandit Motilal Nehru. Though Mahatma Gandhi was in jail there was Rajagopalachari at Gaya to give the 'Gandhian interpretation' of non-co-operation. It was the first time that Rajagopalachari entered the arena of the Congress as an all-India leader who could interpret Gandhiji's ideas with

ability and sincerity. He had given up law in keeping with the Congress resolution of the boycott of law courts and, like Gandhiji in his Ashram at Sabarmati near Ahmedabad, he was doing constructive work from Tiruchengode in an Ashram amid rural surroundings in South India. His debut at the Gaya session of the Congress as a forceful exponent of the Gandhian principles and against such mighty giants as C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru was a determining point in his career. For 15 years thereafter he was universally regarded as the first lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi with regard to the interpretation of Congress politics, while for the execution of any policy and programme Mahatma Gandhi relied on Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The manner in which C. Rajagopalachari defended the boycott of Councils and carried the Congress with him in the absence of Mahatma Gandhi was remarkable. The battle was really fought in the Subjects Committee from which members of the Press were excluded but Mr Sri Prakasa who had worked with me on the *Leader* and *Independent* gave me a complete account of the proceedings, describing Rajagopalachari as 'one whose brain turned like a razor blade'. But the defeat of C. R. Das's party only steeled their determination for independent action as Swarajists without the support of the Congress to enter Legislatures with a view to destroying the prestige and strength of the British Government from within. In the elections to the Legislatures in 1924 a number of Congressmen like Pandit Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das were returned as Swarajists, but the turn of the wheel brought Mahatma Gandhi himself as the President of the Session held in 1924. He did not approve of Swarajists entering the Legislative Councils. From the Presidential chair of the Congress, he remarked: "If I must remain in the Congress and even lead it, I must recognize the facts as they are. It was easy enough for me to go out of the Congress or to decline the honour of presiding. But it was not, so I thought and still think, in

the interest of the country for me to take that step. The Swarajist party represents, if not a majority, at least a strong and growing minority in the Congress. If it was not to divide the Congress on the issue of its status, I was bound to agree to its conditions so long as they were not in conflict with my own conscience. They are not, in my opinion, unreasonable. The Swarajists want to use the name of the Congress for their Party. A formula had to be found for their doing so without their pledging or binding the no-changers to their policy. The Swaraj Party cannot be expected to surrender the advantage which it possesses; after all, it wants the advantage not for itself but for the service of the country. All parties have or can have that ambition and no other. The no-changers can, in my humble opinion, vote for the agreement with a clear conscience. The only national programme jointly to be worked by all the parties is Khaddar, Hindu-Muslim Unity, and, for the Hindus, removal of untouchability. Is not this after all what I want?"

While the constructive programme of the Congress emphasized by Gandhiji relating to Khaddar, Hindu-Muslim Unity, and removal of untouchability remained the key-note of the Gandhian programme during the last 25 years after the Belgaum session, the parliamentary wing of the Congressmen entering the Legislatures attracted greater publicity and attention. Though C. R. Das was the head of this parliamentary wing since the Gaya Congress, it was Pandit Motilal Nehru who had to give shape to its activities in the Central Assembly. C. R. Das himself spent some months in Simla taking rest before his demise in June 1925 and many a leader of the Congress and other schools of thought sought his advice and counsel in regard to the programme to be pursued by Congressmen within the Councils. It was the joint effort of C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru that resulted in the formulation

of what was called the National Demand presented on behalf of the Congress in the Central Assembly by Pandit Motilal Nehru in February 1924. Motilal remarked on that occasion : "I do not want Swaraj to be given to me in a bundle, but I want the substance of Swaraj to be guaranteed," and I found that he made the greatest impression on the Treasury Benches for the time being. But the British Government in London did not take a kindly view of it. The result was in March 1926 the Swaraj Party walked out of the Assembly and the Provincial Councils in accordance with the Congress mandate. Pandit Motilal Nehru observed on that occasion : "We hope and trust that the nation will give a suitable reply to the truculent rejection of our demands and send us again in larger numbers with a stronger mandate and, God willing, with the ambition of fulfilling its aspirations and enforcing its demands." As the election results showed, a larger number of Congressmen were returned to the Legislatures and the Congress itself adopted the Swarajist programme as its own. The national demand was formulated in different phraseology from time to time but met with no better result. Lord Birkenhead as Secretary of State for India challenged the Congress to produce a written constitution ; and the result was the report of the Nehru Committee urging immediate establishment of Dominion Status. A time-limit of one year was given by the Congress for the acceptance of this report and when there was no response Mahatma Gandhi assumed fuller control and forged the weapon of civil disobedience. So far as the work within the Councils was concerned, the motive power of the participants was aimed at destroying the prestige of the ruling power in the country as represented by the bureaucracy.

Pandit Motilal Nehru, accustomed as he had been to gentle methods of persuasion and argument, was not quite up to this task of the rank and file of Congressmen within

the Legislatures. But there was Vithalbhai J. Patel, the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party, who got the opportunity to show his mettle. It came when he was elected President of the Central Assembly in place of Sir Frederick White who had adorned the Chair for four years. At first there were doubts as to whether V. J. Patel could maintain a non-party outlook. But as Mayor of the Bombay Corporation he had given an excellent account of himself. His rival for the presidentship was Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachariar who had been Deputy President for three years. There was even chance but the inferior tactics of Rangachariar deprived him of the much coveted honour. In spite of my advice to the contrary, he went about canvassing, "I have already got forty-five votes in my pocket and want only four or five more," meaning thereby that the Government were backing him. On the other hand, Patel's appeal issued in a statement was couched in the strain of "If you want me I am willing to serve as your President." There were last-minute defections from the side of Rangachari so that Patel was elected President. For Rangachari it was a stunning blow, from the effects of which he took a long time to recover—at any rate, not until he was sent by Government to represent India at the opening ceremony of the new city of Canberra.

With V. J. Patel installed as the Speaker, the Swaraj Party gained in power and prestige. The same year, at the Cawnpore Session of the Congress, the policy and the programme of the Swaraj Party were adopted as those of the Congress itself, when Patel, though not a Congressman then—for he had ceased to belong to any party, according to his own statement in the Assembly—attended, not the open session but the Subjects Committee as a distinguished visitor. There was a stir when one afternoon the bearded gentleman, whose election as Speaker had been watched by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu at Simla, was now hailed by her as President of the Congress into the Subjects Committee meeting:

"Come in, Mr Speaker, and take your seat here." And Patel replied: "Here I am only a stranger." During the five years that he was President, Patel was in the lime-light and, therefore, indirectly, the Congress Party. He was both a tough fighter and a clever tactician. Before the British Government his methods were those of uncompromising resistance to everything that seemed to affect his dignity, authority and position as Speaker of the Indian Parliament. Among his own countrymen he went about often complaining of ill-treatment and suspicion on the part of the British. Many a legend has grown round the work of Patel as Speaker. His fight with Sir Lancelot Graham over the creation of a separate Department for the Legislative Assembly, his leg-pulling of Sir Alexander Muddiman and Sir James Crerar when they were the Home Members of the Government of India, his frequent teasing of Sir B. L. Mitter and several other front benches among Government spokesmen by inconvenient questions, his valiant stand for the cause of the Assembly staff in order that they might use a lavatory earmarked "For Europeans", his speech for the independence of India delivered at the inaugural ceremony of the Indian branch of the 'Empire Parliamentary Association', his barley-water luncheons to the legislators and Executive Councillors, and, last of all, his recommendation for the grant of the title of 'Khan Bahadur' to his office orderly and deliberate refusal to recommend any title to any other person in the Assembly Department—these are but a few of the brilliant incidents of Patelism which enlivened the parliamentary life of Delhi and Simla. His own exit from the scene took place in the summer of 1930 after the Congress Session in Lahore in December 1929. He found that at this Session the Congress had determined to withdraw Congressmen from the legislatures and so, speaking at the unveiling ceremony that he himself performed of the statue of Lala Lajpat Rai, he advised India not to give up the forum of the Legislative Chambers.

But events took their own turn and soon after the Lahore Congress, Gandhiji staged the Dandi March, and the Salt Satyagraha campaign ensued thereafter, resulting in the arrest of several leaders and in the tendering of Vithalbhai Patel's resignation.

When Patel was installed as the Speaker in 1925, he put all the parties in the House at ease by declaring: "I belong to no party; I belong to all parties and I am the servant of the House." Government benches cheered him for these observations, but soon enough they knew his mettle. The first shock came when Sir Alexander Muddiman, who was known to have framed the rules and standing orders of the House, was himself snubbed. Patel had so mastered these rules and orders within a very short time as to keep them at his finger tips. At the end of a day's sitting, Sir Alexander Muddiman questioned the President about certain observations that fell from the Chair. Patel promptly silenced him: "Order, Order. The Hon. Member who, I believe, was the author of the Rules and Standing Orders, seems to have forgotten Rule No. such and such . . . ."

## 2. PATEL'S BOMBSHELL AND BHAGAT SINGH'S BOMB

A major shock fell to the lot of Sir James Crerar when he moved for the consideration of the Public Security Bill in 1929. The speech with which Sir James had initiated it contained almost verbatim the charge-sheet against the Communists in the Conspiracy Case that was being heard before a special Tribunal at Meerut. Who could have suspected the bombshell that Patel had in store for Government benches or for the House? Before the motion was taken up he got up and declared that inasmuch as the grounds on

which the Home Member moved for the consideration of this Bill were the very grounds on which the accused in the Conspiracy Case were being proceeded against, Government must either drop that case or drop this Bill. Six days later, in support of this point, Patel cited a number of authorities, in ruling the motion out of order. Poor Crerar!—Never did he suspect such an ill wind from even Patel as to ruin his reputation. Not only Sir James Crerar but everyone was taken aback; Patel's office staff more than the entire House! The typed copy which he read out, so I came to know, was prepared with the assistance of a typist lent by a lawyer friend residing in Old Delhi. The whole thing had been kept so secret. As a matter of fact, Pandit Motilal told me that he was more taken aback than even Sir James Crerar. Patel was in the right on the legal position pertaining to the ruling. Of course, Delhi consulted London and it came to be known that the law officers of the Crown upheld Patel's point of view. No further motion was made on the Bill but the session concluded with a special address by Lord Irwin, who announced the issue of an Ordinance giving powers to the Executive. But three days before the ruling was given, on the 8th of April, there was an explosion of a live bomb thrown from the public gallery down to the floor of the Chamber. Admission to the public gallery was, as usual, regulated by the issue of tickets obtained through members of the Assembly. But two persons, Bhagat Singh, a well-known Communist from the Punjab and Butukeswar Datta, another Communist hailing from Bengal, had got into the gallery. How they came to possess tickets and took their seats in the gallery with a bomb in the bosom of one and a revolver in the pocket of another was a mystery that was solved later in the courts. The public are aware that when the proceedings of the Public Security Bill were revived, Bhagat Singh threw the bomb on the floor of the House and Butukeswar Datta turned his pistol and shot at the Chief of the Criminal Intelligence



Department who was seated in the official box near the President. There was great confusion: the Chamber was choking with smoke, Members ran helter-skelter. But Patel showed great nerve and stood like a pillar until Sir George Rainey, the Commerce Member, who was also the Leader of the House, suggested to him to adjourn the House for a brief interval. The bomb fell very close to Sir George Schuster, the Finance Member, who was covered over with a considerable amount of dust raised by the bomb-burst, while his assistant (the Budget Officer, Shankar Rao) was struck in the left eye. Just as the bomb exploded, I was in the Press room trying to dispose of Sir James Crerar's speech and rushed into the Press Gallery to watch the scene. Meanwhile, Durga Das came out and sent the first splash of the news all over India and to London. Soon I walked up to Bhagat Singh and Butukeswar Datta who were standing in the Visitors' Gallery. They made no secret of their plan—that it was their business to tell the Government that there was a party (the Revolutionary Party) which believed neither in the Council work nor in the programme of non-violence and that the country would refuse to be cowed down by such measures as the Public Security Bill. Reforms could come not through legislatures but only by revolution. Leaflets containing this assertion were scattered on the floor of the Assembly Chamber from the Gallery by both Bhagat Singh and Butukeswar Datta soon after the explosion. K. C. Roy, who was a member of the House, collected these leaflets and when I went down he handed them over to me.

Fortunately, no one died as a result of the explosion or the pistol shot, for the bomb was thrown in the gangway near Sir George Schuster, while the pistol hit the marble pillar to the right of the Speaker's seat. The two persons, besides the President of the Assembly, who showed great coolness were Bhagat Singh and Butukeswar Datta. They gave me some relevant particulars about themselves and said

that the rest would be heard in court. The court dealt with both the accused not only in connexion with this bomb-throw but also in connexion with the Police Officer Saunders Murder Case at Lahore.

Immediately after the bomb outrage, the entrances to the Council House were closed, and nobody was allowed to go out for over an hour. There was only one Press Room in those days, with a telephone. We monopolized the use of the phone, instructed the Associated Press Office assistant to run up to the telegraph office and after installing himself there keep up contact with us at the Assembly Press Room. This enabled us to keep up a continuous flow of messages dictated over the phone to be booked and flashed all over India and the world. The plan worked very well indeed. No other news agency or Press Correspondent was able to send any message for several hours. The Secretary of State who relies for such reports on the Government of India did not get a single word until three hours later in the afternoon, whereas Reuters had supplied him with a series of our messages covering every aspect of the outrage.

An aftermath of the bomb outrage which Patel had to solve was: who was to control the public gallery—the Police or the President? A battle royal was waged and there was no agreement possible for a long time. One day he stood up in the Assembly and made a statement in which he asked: "Am I the President or a prisoner?" and then ordered the public gallery to be closed to visitors until the matter was settled by the Viceroy (Lord Irwin). The Home Member had sleepless nights. Other officials of Government had also their share of anxiety. The Viceroy found it difficult to adjust the relations between the Police in charge of law and order and the President in charge of parliamentary dignity and privilege. One whole session went without the public in the gallery. Only the Press was permitted to function. The result of the struggle, however, was a compromise which gave

birth to the Watch and Ward staff in the Assembly in charge of a Police Officer, the staff itself being appointed by the Assembly Department, while the Police Officer under the control of the local Government, i.e. the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, is lent to the Speaker.

### 3. SIMON IN THE ASSEMBLY GALLERY

It was during Patel's Presidentship of the Assembly that Sir John Simon came to India in 1927 as head of the Reforms Commission—a Commission of Britishers (Members of Parliament) and no Indian<sup>s</sup>. This was taken as an insult to India's political intelligence and all parties decided upon boycotting the Commission. The Hindus, Muslims, the Congress and the non-Congress forces including Moderates—all joined in the boycott. The Congress itself had decided to withdraw from the Legislatures, but permitted Congressmen to attend only for the Simon Commission Debate and the Reserve Bank Bill introduced by Sir Basil Blackett. Sir John Simon was in Delhi for several weeks staying at Western Court and receiving a number of deputations from the various communal and newly formed political bodies. He received the invitation of the President of the Council of State to watch the proceedings. No such invitation came to him or his colleagues from the President of the Assembly. Patel also had boycotted the Simon Commission! But Sir John Simon and his colleagues after two months' tour of the country came back once more to Delhi and pressure was brought to bear upon Patel so that Sir John and one or two of his colleagues were able to attend one of the sittings of the Assembly from the President's gallery. Sir Hari Singh Gour whose name was being included in the Indian Central Committee that was to be associated with Sir John Simon was evidently anxious to make a speech and create an impression on Sir John Simon.

On the day in question, from the Press Gallery I saw him get up quite a number of times. But did Patel in the Chair see him? So disappointed was Sir Hari Singh Gour that he vented his wrath, complaining: "Sir, I rose ten times and not even once have I been called." To this Patel, cool as ever, replied: "The Honourable Member may get up any number of times, but if he does not happen to catch the eye of the Chair, it is not the fault of the Chair." Sir John Simon, for his part, had tried through the appointment of the Indian Central Committee with Sir Sankaran Nair as Chairman and Sir Hari Singh Gour and others included in it, to mollify the public demand for the association of Indians with the work of his Commission. But Pandit Motilal Nehru, in the debate on the subject, made it emphatically clear that what political India wanted was that an equal number of Indians must be appointed to the Commission by His Majesty the King before Indians would co-operate. This point of view was upheld by a clear majority of 68 votes to 62. Hardly had this result been declared, when from the Press Gallery an attache case was thrown down by a Reporter of the *Hindustan Times* (Chamanlal), which hit Sir Basil Blackett on the head. Sir Basil was not injured, but felt partially stunned for a few moments. There was some excitement in the Press Gallery. Mr K. C. Roy happily intervened. A meeting was arranged between Sir Basil and Chamanlal. The latter explained that it was not due so much to the excitement over the Simon Commission as to the speech delivered a few days previously by Lord Birkenhead in England. This reporter did not stay for long in the *Hindustan Times* and entered upon a career of visiting foreign countries, including Japan and America, and publishing books on the basis of the material obtained there.

It may be interesting to add that K. C. Roy, though a nominated member, was anxious to make his influence felt

in the deliberations. But he did not have the gift of speech-making which lawyers possessed particularly in those days. But he would not throw up the sponge on that account without some effort on his part. So he used to practise elocution, and for this purpose he went all the way to the ruins of Tuglakabad and there used to stand at a particular spot and address. But he was not entirely without a human audience, for he used to take his wife and one or two colleagues like myself on occasions in order to make him feel that he was actually addressing the Assembly. Further, he wanted me to interrupt him and put questions in order to give a debating turn to his speech-making and thereby make him mentally alert for similar situations in the Chamber. The result was that he improved as a speaker and was heard with increasing attention, particularly as he was severely practical in his outlook on affairs and could bring to bear on the topics under discussion an inside knowledge based on his studies as well as his contacts.

#### 4. CONGRESS AND PROHIBITION

Congress in those days was engaged on the programme of spreading the doctrine of Prohibition. Mahatma Gandhi had considered it as one of the essentials in the Congress programme, and C. Rajagopalachari from South India placed himself at the spearhead of the movement. Pussyfoot Johnson (William Eugene Johnson) of New York had some years before come to Madras and had impressed Rajagopalachari with his practice of these ideals. Rajagopalachari wrote in 1945: "Pussyfoot's battle against alcohol was a battle of deeds." Earlier in 1928, at the All-India Convention held in Calcutta, Prohibition was specified as one of the principles of the constitution. Patel as Speaker of the Central Assembly during the period 1925 to 1930, was acting to the

spirit of the times, entertaining friends with only barley-water at luncheons, no alcohol being visible anywhere near about the place. So great was the fervour of the campaign that at one luncheon given by Patel, Pandit Motilal Nehru got up and declared: "Let us drink to the toast of a dry India." But a different scene was witnessed in 1938 long after Patel's exit and demise when Bhulabhai Desai was the Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly. Prohibition was not adhered to on all occasions. At any rate, there was one function arranged by the Chief Whip of the Congress Party in his personal capacity at which some members indulged in alcoholic drinks. It was, no doubt, a private gathering to which members of the Legislature belonging to all parties had been invited. The late Satyamurti who was the Deputy Leader was being coaxed, though unsuccessfully, to take some alcohol. Everyone in Simla talked about it. Durga Das and myself were running a joint news service to several papers and we mentioned this, recalling at the same time the famous words of Pandit Motilal—"drinking to the toast of a dry India". The *Statesman* (Delhi) carried this message in a box in the main news page and when it came up to Simla the next day, it created a mild social upheaval. Bhulabhai Desai, of his own accord sent a long explanation to Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha. We both were sought to be ostracized by some members of the Congress Party. Members of the European Group like Sir Frederick James gently hinted to us how publication of such messages would make social contacts among legislators impossible. As a matter of fact, for the next ten days there were no social engagements in Simla among legislators !

## 5. SIMLA—A CAPITAL HEALTH CITY

The growth of Simla was *pari passu* with the growth

of British Rule in this country especially after Lord Curzon's regime, before which it was not strictly regarded as the summer resort of the Government of India. I have myself spent nearly three decades watching the growth of Simla from a small summer resort to the seat of the mighty British Government in India with all the amenities of civilization except for transport within the town. Simla was popular with the Governors-General not because it provided administrative facilities but because it afforded escape from the heat of the plains, and as the Hon'ble Emily Eden once put it, for 'red cheeks and pleasure hunting'. It was the famous Sir John Lawrence (whose statue on the Mall Road at Lahore is a monumental reminder of the insolent question whether India would like to be ruled by the pen or the sword) who was responsible for the original decision of establishing Simla as the summer headquarters of the Central Government while Calcutta was to be the Winter Capital. Governors-General and Home Members alike would rise in the Legislature to defend the exodus to Simla. Sir Reginald Craddock in 1917 once said to the Right Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri that the workshop of the Indian Empire was really at Simla, and if Government decided to remain in the plains very long protracted noonday siestas would occupy many more hours than any amusement at Simla could. I have listened to the numerous debates both in the old Imperial Legislative Council and in the Legislature of the Montford era over the exodus of the Central Government to a hill station like Simla, but the more vigorous the protest against it the greater was the limpet-like tenacity with which Britishers clung to Simla.

But history has a way of building and destroying capitals as well as Empires. In 1940 Lord Linlithgow decided not only suspension of the Federation in India but also that the Central Legislature should never more meet in Simla. With that decision the future of Simla as the

seat of the Government of India was ended. The five years of war in which legislators rarely visited Simla except perhaps for one or two meetings of the Public Accounts Committee, finalized the issue. Simla was relegated as a centre for accommodating the overflow offices of the main Government stationed in Delhi. But such artificial attempts at giving importance to Simla did not accord with the public sentiment associated with the capital of India. The Secretariat has adjusted itself to the sweltering heat of the Delhi summer with khush tatties and cooling plants.

It was not merely the Governor-General but the Members composing his Executive Council as well that decided this issue. Lord Wavell followed in the footsteps of Lord Linlithgow. He was an anti-Simlaite and so were several of his Councillors. Of course there were others like Sir B. N. Sarma, who though once hotly opposing the exodus, became as hotly enthusiastic of the 'democratic air' of Simla!

I remember the scene in a debate in 1922 in the Central Assembly when Sir B. N. Sarma defended the exodus to the hills. Diwan Bahadur T. Rangachariar as Leader of the Democratic Party was so vexed as to exclaim: "I know there would be white Bureaucrats in this House who would always favour exodus to Simla but I never knew that there would be brown Bureaucrats as well. I know Sir B. N. Sarma, as President of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, sending telegrams after telegrams of protest to the Government against this wicked exodus to the hills. But today the same Sir B. N. Sarma speaks so highly in favour of the exodus to Simla. Sir, let us not go down in history as insincere patriots who said one thing one day and another thing on another."

Meanwhile, New Delhi grew and expanded enormously. Even before the out-break of World War II in 1939, over Rs. 20 crores had been spent in building it. During the War several more crores were expended in order to accommodate the numerous War offices some of which threaten to



permanently blot the Delhi landscape.

Let me relate a conversation that took place in 1931 between Mahatma Gandhi and myself. I happened to walk with Gandhiji into the Viceregal Lodge when he was going up for his famous interview with Lord Willingdon prior to his attending the Second Round Table Conference. He was a tremendously fast walker. But even as he was going up he halted and took rest at two or three stages. As the question of Simla's future was hanging in the balance, I enquired of Gandhiji whether under the Swaraj Government he would favour Simla as the summer resort of Government. His answer was a quick and unequivocal 'No'. "Not Simla, but 7,000 feet below in the plains, [after a pause] at New Delhi." This was published in the Press at the time.

Simla has her uses too. India has not many health resorts to boast of as Australia has for instance. Simla would make an ideal camp for the sick and the ailing or for those sorely in need of rest and recuperation—an ideal centre for health homes and hospitals.

## 6. ONE HOUR WITH DE VALERA

I saw Vithalbhai Patel in England in 1932 after a medical treatment he had received at Vienna. He was staying at the National Liberal Club and his name was being mentioned very frequently in the newspapers as one of the members likely to compose a tribunal to settle the dispute between Ireland and England. Frequent reports were coming from Dublin of his having met De Valera, and that in order to spite Britain, De Valera wanted Patel to be chosen as one of the arbitrators. No such tribunal, however, was appointed, and Ireland managed to cut off all her trappings as a Dominion by abolishing the post of Governor-General, refusing to take

the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown, etc. I had an idea of the bitter relations between Britain and Ireland when I witnessed the debate in the House of Commons in July 1932. J. H. Thomas, who was the Home Secretary, made a vigorous speech against De Valera who was in power in Ireland. One day when I met Patel at the National Liberal Club, I expressed my desire to meet De Valera and wanted a letter of introduction. As he hesitated—it was the first time that he hesitated to do me a good turn—I did not press for it. When I went to Dublin a few days later, I visited the office of the *Irish Press* that had been founded by De Valera himself and had a talk with the Foreign Editor. Somehow, he thought it his duty to bring me in contact with De Valera and rang up the latter's Private Secretary and fixed up an interview. Accordingly, I was at the appointed time with the Irish Premier in his office room. In the adjoining room there were about 50 nuns who were waiting to have a *darshan* of the great Leader. I felt that my interview would not last for more than a few minutes, but it so happened that De Valera himself took enormous interest in Indian politics and particularly in Patel. The more I told him the more was he anxious to know. The result was that I was with him for more than an hour. I heard that the nuns were told to come and see the Premier the next day. I only hope they did not curse me for it !

De Valera's interest in Mr Patel was a deep and personal one. He plied me with questions, intending to get an insight into his political outlook, particularly his attitude towards Britain. What I told De Valera was in effect this. "Patel in the present day politics of India is not a constitution-maker but a constitution-breaker. There is no constitution designed by the British Government, however perfect, which his nimble brain cannot find loopholes in, in order to destroy the prestige of the British Government." De Valera, on hearing this part of my account, exclaimed : "Well, I feel

like growing a beard and covering up my sins as well." (The reference was obviously to his having been equally a destructive force against Britain by exploiting the Irish Constitution in order to bring down the prestige of Britain in Ireland.)

Continuing, he said: "I am trying to understand your Indian problems since 1919, but the more I try to understand them the more complex do I find them. They are not the problems of a country, but of a continent."

Incidentally, comparing the Indian problems with the Irish, he suggested: "You have the same differences that more or less divide us in Ireland. There you have the Hindu-Muslim. Here we have the Protestant-Catholic."

I answered: "In India we watch the Irish struggle with great interest, the politicians in particular."

"I know that," said De Valera nodding thoughtfully, but in a firm voice added: "But the Irish people cannot understand your non-violence. Do your people really believe in non-violence?"

I replied: "Of course, that is the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi and so far that is at any rate the creed of the Congress."

Taking off his specs and cleaning them with his kerchief, he remarked: "But you know, leaders also have to die, and when Gandhi dies, what will happen to your non-violence?"

I replied: "The philosophy of India is essentially one intended to promote non-violence and if the teachings of Gandhi were to endure, then India may have something to teach the world."

On hearing this De Valera laughed and pulling out a revolver from his inside coat pocket waved it in his hand and added: "Well, we live in a different world here. We exist because of violence. At any rate, as the Premier of Ireland I go about with a revolver in my hand. I keep my life in the hollow of my hand."

The conversation drifted to the question of land

annuities, at that time so much under discussion between Ireland and England. De Valera blurted out: "I doubt if the British Government will ever agree to a tribunal as we want. But if and when it is appointed, it will have to examine not only the narrow legal aspect as Mr Thomas asserts frequently in the House of Commons, but it must go down to the root of the matter and even below the root of the matter. Mr Thomas knows it, and that is why the British Government is fighting shy of a tribunal being appointed."

I interrupted: "But your farmers will suffer if the British Government impose duties on imports from Ireland."

De Valera remarked: "That is true up to a point and that is a trick of the British Government, to enable Mr Cosgrave to come to power in the next election. But when the Irish people understand the motive behind the British proposal, they will surely back me."

At this stage, De Valera appeared to be more inclined to speak than to listen. He was like one standing on an election platform. His Irish accent became more and more pronounced. He talked derisively of Ireland's connexion with Britain. He admitted that culturally and socially the Irish and the British were one. But on that account he would not think of continuing to have any constitutional connexion with Britain. "We are practically out of the British Empire," he asserted with an air of pride.

History has recorded the fact that the Oath of Allegiance has gone. The post of the Governor-General was abolished, Ireland has also remained out of the Second World War. Though the Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown is gone, there is still, I believe, the huge statue of Queen Victoria in the quadrangle of the Parliament House in Dublin. De Valera took me to the Parliament House to watch the proceedings of the Dail and the Senate. Noticing the statue, I was about to click my camera, when an aged burly policeman ran up from the direction of the Museum close by and stopped

me. I remonstrated, but he apologized: "This is my order, Sir, I cannot help it. You people know Irish history very well. Even if they decide against the Oath, I hope they will not remove the statue!"

## 7. DE VALERA IN DELHI IN 1948

For 15 years afterwards De Valera continued as Premier of the Irish Republic until his party suffered a defeat. Thereafter, in the summer of 1948 he undertook a tour of the East to attend a Roman Catholic Convention in Australia. During his return journey, he visited Singapore, Rangoon and Calcutta before he arrived in Delhi for a two-day halt. Even during this brief halt he did not forget to visit the Catholic Church in New Delhi. Pressmen expressed to me their keenness to meet him, remembering the fact that I had had an interview with the Irish ex-Premier in 1932 in Dublin, a long account of which had appeared in the Press at the time. At the Palam Aerodrome as soon as De Valera alighted from the plane and recognized me, I conveyed the request of the Pressmen to him, and he responded with a promise. I kept in frequent touch with his Private Secretary Mr Frank Aiken (former Finance Minister of Ireland) with the result that a Conference was arranged at Government House and the Pressmen were enabled not only to contact the great leader of Ireland but also to know his views on international affairs, particularly in the light of the controversy whether India should remain within the Commonwealth or not.

Being an official of the Government of India now I could not put any question to him at the Conference but watched him throughout the one hour that it lasted. My impression was that he had very much mellowed in his views and that while he would fight for the unity of Ireland, he would not spurn the hand of Britain or any other neighbouring powers for an

international hegemony in order to preserve the peace of Europe and of the world. Indeed, he himself said that the people of Ireland were prepared to have external association with the nations of the British Commonwealth also, if it was not inconsistent with their national position and interests as a republic. But they could not owe allegiance to the Crown; they did not recognize the Statute of Westminster; and their association with Britain was based on "practical co-operation". The spirit of co-operation in external policy was exemplified, according to him, in the readiness to accept the King's signature for appointments of Irish diplomatic representatives abroad. But even this signature was purely optional.

Questions were plied in order to draw him out on the two-nation theory which had been created in Ireland much earlier than in India. His answers were revealing. Attempts had been made to show that there were two different nations or peoples in Northern and Southern Ireland, but that was merely ingenious propaganda. He said that even the term Ulster to indicate partitioned Northern Ireland was wrong, for Ulster had been a province of Ireland, and just as the country had been partitioned, Ulster itself had been sub-partitioned. The 'gerrymandering' system of allocation of constituencies had weakened the nationalistic vote in Northern Ireland and bolstered up the pro-partition vote. The Irish Constitution had been drawn up so as to meet the views of the minority as far as possible without stultifying the position of the majority. It would be a negation of democracy, if, in order to meet the wishes of the minority, the principle of self-determination itself was denied and the minority installed in a privileged position. No problem was solved by partition and indeed partition created only two problems in place of one.

De Valera's reference to the United Nations was not particularly enthusiastic. He said the will to co-operate

was not present among its components and that certain members appeared to lack the desire to make the organization function usefully.

In April 1949 Ireland got out of the Commonwealth and proclaimed herself a Republican State without even a formal tie with the British Crown.

## 8. R. K. SHANMUKHAM CHETTY AS SWARAJIST

I shall refer to some interesting episodes concerning me as journalist and Sir Shanmukham Chetty. When he first came to the Central Assembly he was elected the Whip of the Swaraj Party. When the autumn session of the Central Assembly was on at Simla in 1927, Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leader, received a cable from his ailing daughter-in-law at Geneva. As he had to leave Simla suddenly, a party meeting was arranged to elect the acting Leader. Srinivasa Iyengar, Deputy Leader, was chosen. But there was a fly in the ointment. The relation between Srinivasa Iyengar and Chetty had been strained as a result of politics in the Southern Presidency, particularly after the starting of what was called the Self-Respect Movement. Certain speeches had been made by Shanmukham Chetty criticizing the Brahmin ascendancy in the Congress in general, and of Srinivasa Iyengar in particular. Pandit Motilal Nehru decided upon a reconciliation between the two, in order that the Congress Party might function smoothly in his absence. The matter was somewhat delicate, and so it was decided that everyone should take an oath not to let out the proceedings. But I was the first to hear of the news the same evening.

The next morning, however, M. K. Acharya who was a member of the Party and who had himself taken the oath, came to my residence and related to me all the details. I feared that the gentleman might proceed and give the news to other

journalists as well. So I made up my mind to protect the interests of the News Agency (the Associated Press) I was representing, by sending a very short message. I consulted K. C. Roy who agreed, and so a message was sent, stating that at a party meeting Pandit Motilal Nehru announced a reconciliation between Srinivasa Iyengar and Shanmukham Chetty prior to his departure to Geneva. This message was only of general interest to the public. But it was one that would whet the appetite of the newspaper readers of South India most. Besides being in charge of the Associated Press, I was the Special Correspondent of the *Hindu* and *Swadesamitran* of Madras. And so, after consulting Roy I sent them a short summary of the more important particulars as related to me by Acharya. It created a furore in Madras. Dr Varadarajalu Naidu, who was the second-in-command of the Self-Respect Movement, appeared to have got upset, and from Madras telephoned Shanmukham Chetty at Simla. The next day happened to be a Sunday and when I went in the evening to my office, Shanmukham Chetty came up and put a few queries. I immediately suspected that he was after what I had sent to the Madras newspapers. So I pulled out my office copy from the file and showed it to him. He was very anxious to know who supplied the news. He seemed to have been under the impression that it was A. Rangaswami Iyengar (Editor of the *Swadesamitran*) and Secretary of the Congress Party who gave the news to me. I refused to disclose my source and said that if he had any correction to make in the message he could do so. Shanmukham Chetty did not respond.

But the trouble started in South India by Dr Varadarajalu Naidu persisted. He issued a statement, which appeared in the *Hindu* and other papers, that he had been authorized by Shanmukham Chetty to state that there was no truth in the report published about the reconciliation between Shanmukham Chetty and Srinivasa Iyengar. M. S. M.



Sarma was in charge of the news work in the Associated Press at Madras. He flashed Varadarajalu Naidu's contradiction all over India. A. Rangaswami Iyengar had by then resigned the Secretaryship of the Congress Party at Simla. It had nothing to do with the storm in the tea cup between Shanmukham Chetty and Varadarajalu Naidu. It was really a question of his finding it difficult to work under a leader like Srinivasa Iyengar whose temperament was mercurial. Srinivasa Iyengar, the acting Leader, therefore nominated Pandit Nilkanta Das as Secretary. The controversy over my report raged for a few days and Pandit Nilkanta Das issued a statement signed as Secretary, Congress Party, Central Assembly, stating that every word that had appeared in the *Hindu* was correct and that the denial issued by Dr Varadarajalu Naidu was a mischievous attempt to keep up a local faction and thereby affect the smooth working of the Congress Party in the interests of the country. I put it out on the wires immediately and that closed the whole episode. Even before this statement of Nilkanta Das appeared in the Madras papers, K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, another member of the Congress Party, alighted in Madras on his way back from Simla. He was approached by Dr Varadarajalu Naidu who wanted to know the details of the proceedings of the party meeting held in secret. So convinced was he of the accuracy of my report, that without any further consultation with Shanmukham Chetty, Dr Varadarajalu Naidu himself issued a statement expressing an apology to me as Special Correspondent of the *Hindu* and *Swadesamitran* and placing the entire blame for the episode on Shanmukham Chetty. I mention this incident only to show how even an oath is violated in the controversies of politics.

But this incident did not affect my relationship with Shanmukham Chetty. When I was in London in 1932, he was about to embark from there for Ottawa, where he later

played a prominent part in the hammering out of a tariff between Britain and India. I gave him a luncheon which was attended by several distinguished guests, including Walchand Hirachand, Justice Nanavati, Dr C. L. Katial and Col. B. N. Khan. But the deal that was actually transacted at Ottawa was one to which India was almost unanimously opposed. I read the text of the Agreement at Geneva in August in a picked up copy of the *London Times*. It shocked me. I told this to Dr Katial, now the Director-General of State Health Insurance in Delhi, and also to Mr A. C. Chatterji who was then in charge of the Information Section for India, at the League of Nations in Geneva. How the Ottawa Agreement was subjected to severe criticism by the Central Legislature in spite of the very able defence of it by Shanmukham Chetty himself, is a matter of common knowledge. But very soon thereafter, Sir Ibrahim Rahimatullah who succeeded Patel as the Speaker of the Central Assembly, resigned owing to ill-health and Shanmukham Chetty was chosen President. Chetty occupied the Chair for two years until the General Election was held in which he got worsted at the hands of a comparatively little-known person from South India, Sami Venkatachalam Chetty. But during this short period he displayed resourcefulness and dignity becoming of his high office, some of his rulings being regarded as classic, particularly the one on the Indian Navy Bill. From the point of view of the Indian Press, he was responsible for setting up what is called the Press Gallery Committee. There was not sufficient enthusiasm for it from the side of the Government. But Durga Das and myself, who had seen similar committees functioning in the House of Commons and elsewhere, prevailed upon Shanmukham Chetty to agree. Sir Edward Buck and U. N. Sen as doyens in the profession warmly supported the proposal. This committee, however, has not been functioning as satisfactorily as it ought to

be. But it serves as a link between the Speaker of the Assembly and the Press in India, which, in recent years has been applying in increasing numbers for admission to the Press Gallery.

## 9. CHETTY AS FIRST FINANCE MINISTER

A remarkable career as the first Finance Minister of Free India, was out off as remarkably, exactly after one year, and that on the first anniversary of Independence Day. Shanmukham Chetty, when he was appointed on August 15, 1947, was not a Congressman but had been an opponent of the Congress for some years, though originally several years ago, he had been a Congressman. The trend of politics in South India had taken him away from the Congress fold, and, so to say, ostracized him. His ability in understanding financial problems and his clarity of expression had, however, marked him out as an outstanding person whose opinion, even if it was not followed by Government, could not be ignored. In fact, so marked out was he even five years ago, that the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce had a proposal (so I was informed by G. D. Birla) to appoint him as the permanent President of that body on a salaried basis. He was, however, not for any such appointment.

When, however, India attained Independence in August 1947, to fill the post of Finance Minister was a problem. The choice fell on Shanmukham Chetty and when he received the offer he publicly declared that he could not believe his eyes and that he was most happy. But the confidence reposed in his ability was tempered with the reflection, on the part of a section of Congressmen, that he was not well-disposed towards the Congress, the premier political organization now in power. The memory of the part played by Shanmukham Chetty in Ottawa in 1932, when he was the

signatory to the 10 per cent preference to Empire goods, was also fresh in everybody's mind. But even so, no serious objection was raised to the choice made by Pandit Nehru on the advice of his friends. When, therefore, the first Interim Budget was presented by Shanmukham Chetty after the partition of India, without any reference to the service of the Congress in the achievement of Independence, and on the other hand when he mentioned the self-abnegation on the part of the Britishers, there was a howl of protest led by front benchers of the Congress Party like Ananthasayanam Ayyangar. Shanmukham Chetty realized, or ought to have realized through that demonstration, that he was only tolerated by the Congress Party as the Finance Minister and, therefore, should have been very careful in his handling of that Party. He perhaps thought that the Nehru Cabinet would stand by him through thick and thin, whatever might be the feelings of individual members of the Congress Party about him.

To that howl of protest Shanmukham Chetty had to bow with a suitable apology the very next day. The Interim Budget was adopted in the usual course. Then came his trial of strength over the budget in February-March, 1948. By that time it was thought he was well in the saddle. His handling of the Indian finances, and his manner of dealing with financial problems, elicited the appreciation of all sections of the House. But there always remained a section which was doubtful about him.

When Liaquat Ali had announced the proposal to set up an Income-tax Evasion Commission, it was made clear that there would be a legislation which would regulate the work of the Commission. This legislation was piloted by Shanmukham Chetty himself, and accordingly, it was understood that the spirit of the legislation would be kept in view by the Finance Ministry, in regard to the treatment of the cases referred to the Commission. But it so happened that

rumours were afloat in Bombay and other financial circles that a serious flaw had been committed by the Finance Minister himself ordering withdrawal of some important groups of cases from the purview of the Commission. The *Free Press Journal* of Bombay gave the first hint of it. Professor K. T. Shah referred from the floor of the House to 'ugly rumours' then afloat on the subject. Nobody treated them seriously at the time even though the charges were serious.

Soon after the Budget session, Shanmukham Chetty had to lead the delegation to London in respect of Sterling Balances. When he was there, the matter was taken up in Delhi by the Nehru Cabinet on the strength of reports that were still being circulated in India. Sardar Patel was in Dehra Dun. K. C. Neogy was in temporary charge of the portfolio of Finance in Delhi. K. R. K. Menon as head of the Central Board of Revenue was understood to have advised the Finance Minister (Shanmukham Chetty) against scoring off of the names of the parties but they had been scored off in spite of the advice.

When Shanmukham Chetty returned from London, the matter was taken up. There were two meetings of the Cabinet at which the question was raised, and on both the occasions it was felt that there was no *mala fide* proved and that all that could be attributed to him was an error of judgement.

The Assembly Session came to be held in August 1948 and this provided an occasion for ventilating the matter at the instance of some members of the Congress Party. From lobby reports I was able to piece together the following account of what happened. A section of Congressmen from U. P. and Madras vigorously canvassed for an investigation into the conduct of Shanmukham Chetty. Hence a special meeting of the Party was held on Friday, 13th August. So what was regarded as having blown over at the Cabinet level, was being subjected to storm by Party men. Ananthasayanam,

as Secretary of the Congress Party, just mentioned the receipt of a representation, and related the facts of the case on broad grounds of not consulting the Commission before withdrawing the cases. Ramnath Goenka almost led the offensive with questions, seeking information as to the various dates on which the matter was handled. The answers given by the Finance Minister are said to have been inaccurate in one or two respects. He was, therefore, cross-examined. To this, however, Chetty indignantly remarked: "Even assuming that your dates are more accurate, what is the insinuation?" This query at that stage by Chetty put up the back of several members whose attitude had hitherto been neutral and might be said to have been even friendly towards him. Pandit Nehru made it clear more than once that the Cabinet had twice discussed the matter and found nothing *mala fide* against Shanmukham Chetty, but it was open to the Party to thrash out the matter with Shanmukham Chetty who was present at the meeting. This led to Pandit Govind Malaviya making a reasoned speech concluding with the suggestion that the matter should be left to Pandit Nehru himself to decide after eliciting information from Shanmukham Chetty. There was a pause for a few minutes—an inconvenient pause—nobody talking, though everybody was anxious to come to grips with the issue. Then Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya spoke. He said that from the facts disclosed, it was clear that Shanmukham Chetty had not only committed a grave error of judgement, but had lowered the prestige of the Congress in the eyes of the public. What course he should adopt was no longer a matter of doubt but for decision by Chetty himself. While they had admired the ability of Chetty during the one year in which he had handled India's many and complex financial questions, their admiration was tinged with the regret that a blow had been struck at the prestige of the Congress which had to be restored. Further, the Government could not look on

without coming to some decision. It was, therefore, for Shanmukham Chetty to do everything possible to restore democratic parliamentary government and for the Nehru Cabinet to act boldly in the matter. As for the Congress Party, it could not afford to minimize the seriousness of the issue involved and must do everything to repair the mischief.

There was a fair measure of agreement that there was no course other than that of resignation by Shanmukham Chetty. Apart from the answers to questions put to him, Shanmukham Chetty did not choose to make any statement to clear his position at that meeting.

On the 15th August, the Governor-General gave a reception in celebration of Independence Day. There was a very large gathering and the whisper went round that the exit of Chetty was only a matter of a few hours. Chetty himself moved freely among the crowd. Next day the Associated Press published a small report making out that owing to a Secretarial error in the treatment of the tax evasion cases the Finance Minister was hauled up, and that his resignation was considered a certainty. The language of the news agency was perhaps not quite correct and its representative was taken to task for it by one member of the Congress Party in the lobby. It was, however, this news agency which, by its publicity, forced the pace of events.

The next day, Pandit Nehru replied to Shanmukham Chetty accepting his resignation. These letters were handed over to me on the strict understanding that it was not to be published or broadcast till day-break. In his letter Shanmukham Chetty had mentioned that *it had not occurred to him or his advisers that the procedure adopted was wrong*. This implicated the experts of the Central Board of Revenue. When the letter appeared in the morning papers on Tuesday, the 17th, K. R. K. Menon (who only two days previously had been appointed by Shanmukham Chetty as the Finance Secretary) took up the matter and pointed out to Pandit

Nehru that what was stated in the Finance Minister's letter required to be clarified immediately in order to relieve the Secretariat of the charge against it. Therefore, Shanmukham Chetty was called upon by Pandit Nehru to explain himself before the Assembly.

It was fifteen minutes before the close of the question hour, when Shanmukham Chetty entered the Chamber—calm, cool and collected as usual. Though the matter disclosed was all against himself about his own error, he spoke bravely. Pandit Nehru referred to the 'full and frank statement' made by Chetty and congratulated him as well as the House that in the ultimate analysis, the purity of administration through the democratic process of parliamentary government had been upheld.

## 10. PRESS INTERVIEWS

Every journalist has to his credit the occasional triumph of an unexpected interview with men of renown. In former days a Minister of Government was not permitted to make public utterances on any other than his own Department. But there have occurred quite a few infractions of this salutary rule. I can recall such an incident as early as 1921 when Sir B. N. Sarma, the Member for Education and Agriculture, was touring in Sind, looking into the locust menace. The Editor of the *Daily Gazette*, Karachi, who was also the correspondent of the Associated Press, sent a long message in the form of an interview with Sir B. N. Sarma. It related to no Department concerning Sarma himself. It was all about Army Reorganization, the Esher Committee Report, military expenditure and such other matters. As soon as this message was received in Delhi, I suspected its genuineness and telegraphed to newspapers all over India to suspend publication until the message was confirmed. It took three



days for us to get a reply from Sarma, who was still touring in the Sind desert. It ran as follows: "Thanks your telegram. No interview as such. It was just a casual talk with the Editor of *Daily Gazette*. Please do not publish." Accordingly, we stopped publication of the message through the Associated Press, though it had appeared in the *Daily Gazette*.

Interviewing a non-official or a public man is, however, a very different thing. He is only itching to be interviewed, and there is no limit to his loquacity. A decade ago, particularly before the Constitution Act of 1935, if the Press did not take notice of politicians, the politicians issued their own statements—resulting in a warfare of statements. Newspapers vied with News Agencies and *vice versa*. This phase of politics-making through statements was brought under control by the refusal of well-established newspapers like the *Hindu* of Madras to publish any statement unless it had news value. But I do not think this disease has been completely eradicated, or will ever be. Publicity is the very breath of some politicians and competition in public life gives zest to it. But there is need for greater discretion on the part of newspaper editors. One should not expect to obtain statements on policies by interviewing officials. These statements are generally reserved for the Legislature which is their legitimate forum; or may be embodied in communiques which are later elaborated at Press Conferences. They, therefore, become the legitimate property of all and cannot be the exclusive property of any one single journalist. But occasions there are in which a change of policy or modification of it might be obtained in an interview by a journalist. Srinivasa Iyengar could be interviewed at any time. There was no need even to fix up an engagement with him. But not so Pandit Motilal Nehru, who was cautious and deliberate in every word that he uttered. But with Gandhiji you could fix up a time and if he gave it, you could be sure of an excellent copy, provided,

however, you gave him in advance the subject on which you wished to see him. There were many occasions on which I had to do this, both as a News Agency Correspondent and as Special Representative of several newspapers. I refer not so much to obtaining an interview as to obtaining a statement. At Gauhati we had all assembled for the session of the Congress in 1926. The news of the murder of Swami Shraddhanand by a Muslim fanatic in Delhi was received by me in a short news message from K. C. Roy. The opinions of public leaders were required and sought on this unhappy event. The train by which Gandhiji, Srinivasa Iyengar and other leaders arrived was besieged by journalists. Srinivasa Iyengar, the President of the Congress of that Session, gave his views without any hesitation. But not Mahatma Gandhi. He promised to give me a statement if I gave him particulars of the murder. I secured the details by evening and handed them over to him in his hut on the bank of the Brahmaputra. He glanced at them and said: "Yes, tomorrow morning at 9." I went next morning at ten minutes to 9, and as soon as he saw me, he remarked: "But you are ten minutes too early." He was engaged in writing the statement though there were ten other persons in the hut, some spinning and others chatting. Undisturbed by any of it, he was writing and as his time-piece on the desk struck 9, he wrote the last word and signed "M.K.G." and handed me the copy. I read it and re-read it, it was an absolutely flawless document and some of it deserves to be recalled: "Death is no fiend. He is the truest of friends. He is like sleep, a sweet restorer. Though Shraddhanand is dead, he is yet living. He is living in a truer sense than when he moved about in our midst in his giant body. The family in which he was born, the nation to which he belonged are to be congratulated upon so glorious a death as his. He lived a hero; he has died a hero. But there is another side to the shield. The joy of his death is tempered by the sorrow

that an erring, misguided brother has been the cause of it . . . . . It does not matter to me what prompted the deed. The fault is ours. The newspaper man has become a walking plague. He spreads the contagion of lies and calumnies. He exhausts the foul vocabulary of his dialect and injects his virus into the unsuspecting, and often receptive, minds of his readers. Leaders, intoxicated with the exuberance of their own language, have not known to put a curb upon their tongues or pens. It is therefore we, the educated and the semi-educated class, that are responsible for the hot fever which possessed Abdul Rashid. . . .” I am quoting from the article to show the amount of thought Mahatmaji had bestowed and yet as he was concluding the article, he was compressing his thoughts in a manner which would finish exactly at 9. His was indeed a well-regulated, controlled and disciplined mind and body which could be set to service according to a schedule. I thanked Gandhiji for his statement, and he said : “You must send a copy of it to my *Young India*.”

## 11. WHAT IS A CONGRESS SESSION\*

Except for two sessions—Karachi in March 1931 and Faizpur in March 1932—I have attended every session of the Congress since 1919. I had attended the Congress session held in Madras in 1913 presided over by Mr Bupendranath Basu. To those who have not attended a Congress session a short description might be interesting. From a handful of retired Judges and lawyers, the Congress in its set-up has developed into one of the greatest political gatherings so far known in the history of democracy. Looking back over the last thirty-five years, one cannot but wonder at the transformations that have taken place—in its set-up, composition, outlook, equipment, objects and programme. At the Madras

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\* Extracts from a Talk on A.I.R.

session in 1913, the Governor (Lord Pentland) graced it with his presence for a few minutes. That was the first and last of any attention that a British Governor showed to the Congress actually in session. It was at that time considered such an event that a resolution of welcome was hurriedly drafted and Sir Surendranath Banerji moved it in his characteristically eloquent style.

The Congress session nowadays is a huge political *mela*. Like all *melas* the arrangements for those attending it are so temporary as to be unsatisfactory. Till 1930 it used to be held during the Christmas week. But the experience of the delegates and visitors at the Lahore session in 1929 when many delegates suffered severe frost-bite led to a determination on the part of Mahatma Gandhi to change the time of the Congress to spring (March or April) and simultaneously there was also the decision to have the Congress sessions not in urban areas but in rural areas. These two decisions changed the complexion of the Congress in regard to the arrangements for the delegates and visitors. In the pre-Gandhian days the sessions were held in cities, with the usual urban equipment. That was given up even so early as in 1921 at Ahmedabad when every one had to squat on the ground. Now a further change was effected when there was not even a pandal required to hold the open session. For, since 1931 the Congress meets in rural settings. The best accommodation that is obtainable for the delegates and visitors is a thatched roof supported by bamboo poles. The best cot available is something like a hammock hanging precariously on a four-legged frame. Of course, water and electric lights are provided, but the arrangements for even these elementary conveniences are not quite satisfactory. But the brave thousands who assemble to discuss the nation's future political programme bear these little inconveniences with a commendable degree of cheerfulness and good humour.

Though Congress sessions were held in rural surroundings it does not mean that we retired entirely from the amenities of urban life. The Railways still carry us to a station near the village; the Posts and Telegraphs Department extends its commercial activities by opening a well-equipped office in order to carry the loads of letters by mail and transmit through the cables millions of words of impassioned eloquence that fall from the lips of leaders. A bank opens an *ad hoc* Branch to receive money for safe deposit. Before it was decided to hold the Congress sessions in rural areas, there used to be other 'side-shows' along with the Congress session, such as the Theistic Conference, the Psychic Conference, the Untouchables Conference, the Social Reforms Conference, the Humanitarian Conference, the Cow Protection Conference, and so on. All these have been dispensed with mainly because these are considered now to be very minor in comparison with the major and mainly political issues of the Indian National Congress. The Muslim League after 1925 also ceased to hold its annual sessions with the Congress. But one feature which has remained unchanged is the Swadeshi Industrial Exhibition. This has, so to say, become part and parcel of the Congress sessions though it derives its inspiration largely from the All-India Village Industries Association founded by Mahatma Gandhi. The opening ceremony of this Exhibition was almost invariably performed by Mahatma Gandhi himself and served to attract thousands of people of the Province where the session was held.

The first thing that attracts the attention of the visitor at a Congress session is not so much the Swadeshi Exhibition as the lofty standard of the tricolour flag, the hoisting ceremony of which fittingly forms the first event of the political week. Congress Nagar is well laid out, and consists of a series of roads, each road being named after some leader or other. Everyone you meet is in khaddar and even the city-bred individual brave enough to wear trousers has at

least a white khaddar cap on. The craze affects even foreigners, whether they come as visitors or as journalists. (There was a time when the annual session of the Congress provided a variety of colour and costume typical of the dress of several Indian Provinces.) Against this simple white background are the bright multi-coloured saris of our women, making one realize that the Congress is no longer a mere men's show.

If you are a delegate, your way though the crowd is easier, for each Provincial camp is marked. If you are a visitor you have to spend a little time in finding accommodation. Of course, there are volunteers in khaddar uniform ready to help and guide. Once you find your hut, you look around for your bath and for your meals etc. There are general kitchens, as well as special kitchens. In special kitchens food of a particular province is available. For the South Indian wants his coffee, the Bengalee his Darjeeling tea and the Punjabi his *lassi*!

In each provincial delegates' camp, the President of the Provincial Congress Committee is the central figure round whom buzz vigorous conversations as to the moves of the rightists and leftists; what particular resolutions will be moved and what amendments should be proposed. What does the Working Committee propose by way of official resolutions and, therefore, what should be done in the form of non-official resolutions? These discussions are extensions of those already carried on in the trains, but the issues get narrowed down after exchange of ideas with all-India leaders.

The leaders' camp is really the spot where all the brain-waves are caught before definite proposals emanate in the form of draft resolutions by the Working Committee. The Working Committee sits for two or three days when very little is done by the crowds outside in the Congress Nagar except increase the gate collection at the Swadeshi Exhibition. As, however, the impatience of the gathering grows, the

task of the journalist in assessing the trend of the whispers in the inner sphere becomes essential. There is anyhow a fair degree of correct appreciation based on several factors—the remarks of Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Mrs Naidu, the group consultations between Sardar Vallabhbhai and Acharya Narendra Dev, the fact that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru enters the Congress President's hut with a few typewritten sheets, the report that Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari is drafting something on the back verandah of Mahatma Gandhi's hut. And though it is a village, a radio set has been brought in by the company which has installed the loud-speakers for the session and therefore, both morning and evening, the set is tuned in for news bulletins, attracting the largest crowd that a radio has ever drawn. But speculation is still rife because Mahatma Gandhi, in the serenity of his silence on Monday is drafting the central resolution which generally provokes the greatest controversy; and when such a draft emerges for consideration by the Working Committee, it is invariably adopted as good enough to command the approval of the All-India Congress Committee and, therefore, of the Congress itself.

It is on such a resolution that the parties within the Congress hold the best debate of the session. Mahatma Gandhi himself does not come to sponsor or speak on it as there are very able spokesmen to carry it through. But the members of the All-India Congress Committee display remarkable forensic skill. The emotional Bengalee is pitted against the logical Madrasi while the matter-of-fact Maharashtrai is up against the strident Punjabi and the business-like Bombayite faces the boisterous U. P.-wallah. And all these characteristics are reflected in the different intonations of different Provinces.

The approval of the central resolution by the A.I.C.C. means practically the end of the session itself, for, the open session is intended more to give a mass verdict on it and

it is rarely that the decision of the A.I.C.C. is opposed by the fuller body of delegates. By this time, there is a general feeling of tiredness and the strain of the last few days. The delegates complain of bad liver and heavy eyes and there is every evidence that their stock of clean clothes has been exhausted. Even whilst the discussion on the central resolution is in progress, the delegates are taking their return tickets at the special booking stalls and the kit-bags are ready. The voting done, the delegates disperse with less talk and more reflection. And out of the village Congress all that is left is the village itself, as the Congress has dispersed for one more year to meet in some other village in some other Province.

## 12. REPORTING OF THE CONGRESS

The Congress has been in existence now for six decades. For more than half the period, i.e. from 1920, Mahatma Gandhi dominated in its counsels and also in its working. This period has more or less coincided with the most active period of my journalistic career. My association with Congressmen had, however, begun much earlier, thanks to the start I had, especially with leaders like G. Subramania Iyer, Nawab Syed Mohammad and Mrs Annie Besant in Madras and with Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in Allahabad. The real news of a Congress session was chiefly obtainable from such leaders as Gandhiji, Nehru, Patel and Rajendra Prasad while the rest of it lies in the reporting of the proceedings either of the open session or in the A.I.C.C. which is the deliberative body of the Congress. While I had the advantage of close personal contact with principal leaders whose deliberations behind the scenes constituted the most essential news regarding the policy and programme of the Congress, my colleague Durga Das in the



Associated Press had the advantage of knowing Hindustani. However, there was excellent team work between us both which was appreciated in Congress circles, even as they had occasions to admire the same in our capacity as editors in the Associated Press and Reuters, whether in the Indian Parliament or outside it. Indeed, we have often been hailed as the Siamese Twins ! Between us both we have done a considerable amount of publicity work for the Congress, the Muslim League, and other all-India organizations which no other two journalists can yet claim to have achieved. We had the honour of not only working together as editors in the Associated Press and Reuters at the headquarters of the Government of India for well nigh 20 years, but also we had the greater honour of resigning our posts together for a principle which the Press of India appreciated but failed to take advantage of by starting a national news agency for which there was then every need and all signs of promise.

However, it was my association with the Congress leaders that encouraged me to influence them to throw open to the Press the proceedings of the A.I.C.C. As happens on such occasions, there was opposition to it in the beginning. For all Congress sessions I used to go ahead of Durga Das in order to establish my personal contacts with the leaders. At the Ahmedabad session in 1921 I stayed as the guest of Vithalbhai Patel and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for a few days before I shifted to the Congress Nagar. Both the Patels were very helpful with their advice and guidance. Vallabhbhai Patel was the Chairman of the Reception Committee and his advice prevailed in practically everything during that session. Everyone knew that the session was to make an important departure from the policy pursued by the Congress and that Mahatma Gandhi was to enunciate the policy of non-cooperation with the British Government in terms of a triple boycott. I pleaded that the proceedings of the A.I.C.C.

be laid open to the Press, and the two Patels sympathized with my point of view and spoke to Mahatma Gandhi. But how were they to put it through against the contrary practice? There were consultations among Congress leaders and the compromise reached was that the representatives of the Associated Press (Durga Das and myself) were to be allowed to watch the proceedings and prepare a Press summary which was to be shown to Mahatma Gandhi before it was transmitted over the wires. This was the beginning of the 'intrusion' of the Press in the proceedings of the A.I.C.C. Here I must pause to pay a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi for his consideration towards the demands of the Press as well as of the public, in going through our copy. He allowed practically everything that we submitted. As for the corrections he made in the copy, I must say that they were very vital and essential, revealing his superior knowledge of editing including grammar and punctuation, and all this he did whilst the proceedings were on, and whilst he was thinking out his own speech.

Our reports thus obtained were published throughout India and cabled abroad. But the fact that only two journalists were admitted naturally became a matter of protest from several newspapermen. The result was that at the next session of the Congress held at Gaya when Mahatma Gandhi was in jail and there was a clash between the Swarajist School led by C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru and the Gandhian School led by C. Rajagopalachari, the Press was not allowed to report the proceedings, even though the All-India Congress Committee itself consisted of half a dozen journalists. My pleadings at Gaya were in vain. There was thus a set-back to the precedent of the Press being admitted to the proceedings of the A. I. C. C. In fact at a special session of the A. I. C. C. held in Delhi a few months later, at the residence of Hakim Ajmal Khan when Durga Das and myself went in to ascertain if we could be allowed to

report the session as at Ahmedabad, there was opposition voiced by Mr Abhyankar who queried: "Why this fascination for the Associated Press?" Still, every bit of the proceedings was available from every delegate soon after the day's sitting was over. The question therefore was to be taken up at the next annual session of the Congress held at Belgaum over which Mahatma Gandhi himself presided. Before he left for Belgaum he was staying in Delhi for a few days as the guest of Dr Ansari. I broached the subject explaining the difficulties of pressmen in having to give a connected and correct account of the proceedings. He promised to look into the matter at Belgaum. And even before I arrived there we received the happy news that the proceedings of the A. I. C. C. would be thrown open to the Press as a matter of right. Thus it was from 1923 that the Press enjoyed the right of admission to the A. I. C. C. proceedings.

### 13. CONGRESS SPECIAL SERVICE

News agencies by virtue of serving newspapers in more than one Province and in more than one country play a great part in publicity. The Associated Press, as the premier news agency in the country at the time, may be said to have rendered a great service to the national cause by the publicity write-up it gave to the Congress. Up to 1930 the Congress sessions used to be held during Christmas week, and the Anglo-Indian newspapers in the country were chary of disturbing their readers with too much of the "hot stuff" poured out of the Congress. But even then they could not do without subscribing to the amplified service supplied by the Associated Press which was available for the very nominal payment of Rs. 40, the telegrams going direct to the newspapers under the multiple system. As the charge was very low, and the service was extensive and prompt, covering a variety of

topics connected with the Congress, as well as the various other side-shows held in the same week, newspapers, whether edited by Indians or Anglo-Indians, subscribed to it. There were newspapers willing to pay four times the amount as remuneration to the news agency for the service supplied because it was so well compiled and presented. I therefore once suggested to K. C. Roy that the subscription amount be raised to Rs. 100. Roy immediately turned down the suggestion with an explanation which revealed his patriotism: "My dear Iyengar, it is the inexpensiveness of our service that persuades so many newspapers including Anglo-Indian newspapers to take it. By raising the subscription you may lose at least two or three Anglo-Indian newspapers and to that extent you will be depriving the Congress of the publicity it now receives among their readers."

Towards this cheap service, however, two Indian-edited newspapers hesitated to subscribe at first when the Congress sessions were held in their areas, *viz.* the *Hindu* in Madras and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in Calcutta. The Madras session of the Congress was held in 1927. The *Hindu* as the premier newspaper with its efficient band of well-trained reporters thought of doing without the special service of the Associated Press. I was covering the Congress events practically single-handed. As it usually happens, whoever can obtain the first news of the decision of the Working Committee on the most burning topic of the session gets the scoop. The most important decision of the Congress Working Committee then was a formula intended to bring about better understanding between the Hindus and Muslims. I obtained the text of this formula at least three hours before it fell into the hands of any other journalist and splashed it all over India and supplied it to newspapers in Madras including the *Hindu*. The *Hindu* published it with due acknowledgment to the Associated Press Service. The same evening the *Hindu* thought it worth while to subscribe to the special service.

The next session of the Congress was in Calcutta. The principal issue was the attitude to be adopted over the Nehru Committee Report. Again, a formula was being hammered out by the members of the Working Committee at the residence of Pandit Motilal Nehru, situated far away from the Congress Camp. Till midnight no compromise had been reached among the members, and everyone went back to the camp in the confidence that nothing could be done till the next day. But luck came my way. At 3 in the morning there was the noise of a typewriter heard very close to my hut in the office of the Reception Committee Secretary in the Congress Camp. This was most unexpected at that hour. I smelt a great news item and awakened Durga Das. We both went out hunting. Engaging a taxi at that late hour we set out to nose around news at the leaders' camp. Before 4 a.m. our efforts were rewarded with the text of the compromise formula, that if the British Government did not accept the Nehru Report based though it was on Dominion Status, the Congress would launch non-violent non-co-operation. This news was supplied promptly to all the papers subscribing to the special service. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* like the *Hindu* in the Madras Congress immediately applied for subscription to the special service of the Associated Press.

#### 14. PRESS GALLERY INCIDENTS

Ever since the Press was admitted, as a matter of right, to the proceedings of the A. I. C. C., the Press Block began to expand in size. Applications for admission grew fast in numbers. Not only working journalists but even those remotely connected with newspapers have been applying for admission to the Press Block because from that vantage point one could watch the proceedings of the A. I. C. C. very closely. It would be correct to say that the Press Block

covers nearly one third of the area of the A. I. C. C. pandal. *At the Tripuri Congress held in 1938 with Mr Subhas Chandra Bose as President*, there was an unfortunate incident between an Allahabad journalist (Mr Sanyal) and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It was a very keen and exciting session involving an ideological clash between Subhas Chandra Bose and his Forward Block on the one side and the Gandhian Party headed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on the other. Mahatma Gandhi himself did not attend the session. He had attracted the attention of the country that very week to Rajkot where he undertook a fast over the issue of the States people. It was well known that Gandhiji had not been happy with the election of Subhas Chandra Bose as the President of the Congress that year. He had himself suggested the name of Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya and admitted his defeat as a 'personal' one. The Gandhian party, however, was strong in numbers at the Congress session. They had not only the debating talent but also the voting strength. The Congress was in power in seven Provinces and the Ministers together with their Parliamentary Secretaries and Whips, were all present to 'demonstrate their loyalty to Congress' by voting for the proposition moved at the instance of the Gandhian party. The proposition was to the effect that in the selection of the members of the Working Committee Subhas Chandra Bose should consult Mahatma Gandhi. But Subhas Chandra Bose claimed a free hand. The tension was so high between the rival parties that great excitement prevailed shortly before the voting was to take place. Suddenly there was a bolt from the blue. Acharya Kripalani as Secretary advised the Pressmen assembled in the Press Block to clear out of the pandal, informing that the result of the voting would be announced as soon as it was recorded. There was an uproar from the Press Block, as we were all anxious to watch the scene of the voting that was to take place by show of hands. We wanted

to watch in particular the relative strength of the components of the Forward Block belonging to the various Provinces who really were behind the election of Subhas Chandra Bose, and were determined to see how under the whipping that had gone on on both sides the Forward Block members would cast their votes. But from the dais Jawaharlal Nehru noticed Sanyal, who was more vociferous in the Press Block than others in demonstrating our protest. He leaped from the dais, tore up his Press card, caught him by the collar and almost threw him out of the A. I. C. C. pandal. Nehru was indeed in a rage. Apart from my own urge, I was approached by my colleagues to obtain permission to stay on. I had a talk with both Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Subhas Chandra Bose and they agreed to our being present. So we had the opportunity of watching the voting. The sympathy felt for Sanyal was however voiced at a protest meeting of journalists held half an hour later. I arrived there late, but by then they had got down to drafting a resolution. I suggested that the matter could be negotiated personally. I was made the chief negotiator. Next morning when I saw Jawaharlal Nehru he gave me a patient hearing and wrote to the General Secretary of the Congress for the issue of a new card to Sanyal.

At the Jaipur session in 1948, the arrangements made for the Press in the A. I. C. C. pandal were on the usual scale, but at the open session they were badly organized, and discrimination was shown to a few press correspondents who were given seating accommodation on the dais while the majority of pressmen were seated far away in the burning sun. There were demonstrations of protest followed by a walk-out. Shankar Rao Deo as Secretary of the Congress tried to reason with the principal demonstrators and failed. I intervened and a compromise was reached whereby all the pressmen were accommodated the next day on the dais. The Congress as an organization has grown too big indeed to avoid

such occasional misunderstandings. The admission to the Press Block in the A. I. C. C. itself requires to be better regulated while the seating accommodation in the open session should permit of no discrimination, though news agencies could be allotted front row seats.

## 15. PRESS CONFERENCES BY CRIPPS

Press Conferences in India have come into vogue only in recent years. Till about 1930 the system did not so generally prevail. There used to be, however, Press Conferences every Thursday held by the External Affairs Secretary since 1930 at which Press representatives could learn the state of affairs on the borders of India, in Baluchistan, Afghanistan, Waziristan, Tibet and Nepal. It was not always that these conferences were productive of thrilling copy, but occasionally, there were items which could be featured on the front page and even cabled abroad. Sir Aubrey Metcalfe who was in charge of the External Affairs Department was very fond of holding such Press Conferences and giving sufficient information, and in his absence Sir Olaf Caroe used to preside. Other Departments of Government were not permeated by this publicity policy, though they were vitally concerned with the daily needs of the people. The recent practice in America, of holding weekly conferences at the White House between the President and the representatives of the Press, extended itself to England and when reports of similar conferences came to India, the idea of arranging meetings between the Government officials and Press representatives on policies and measures was forcibly impressed on the minds of authorities. So when the publicity machinery of Government was expanded along with the introduction of Reforms in 1937, the movement received a fillip in favour of Press Conferences. But it was not until



the Allied suffered reverses in the East and Sir Stafford Cripps as Lord Privy Seal of Britain came to India in March 1942 with the British Government's Declaration, and held a series of Press Conferences, that the utility of the machinery of a Press Conference was felt both by the Government and by the public. A new tone was given to the system of holding Press Conferences and many a leader vied with another in order to express his views and announce his programmes. Thus in the wake of the Cripps Mission followed this development of the Press in India; it became the object of attention and a medium for broadcast to the newspapers, as well as on the wireless and for cables abroad. The presence of American Correspondents who were familiar with the procedure of Press Conferences also contributed to shaping the technique of the Press in India. They attended almost every conference held in Delhi and Simla along with Indian, British and other correspondents. Nowadays, to such Press Conferences come the representatives of the Press of India, England, America, Russia, France, China, Australia, Indonesia, Malaya and Egypt.

Soon after the Cripps Mission, when Gandhiji was commandeering the country for the well-known "Quit India" resolution of August 1942, there was not a leader who was not anxious to speak his mind. A Press Conference without Americans was in those days considered to be like 'Hamlet' without the Prince of Denmark. At any rate, at one of these conferences held in New Delhi by C. Rajagopalachari at the office of the *Hindustan Times*, he waited forty-five minutes to have at least one American correspondent put in his appearance. This was soon after Lord Linlithgow had refused, on 1st April 1943, to receive a deputation organized by him to set up a National Government at the Centre. The Press Conference mania reached such a pitch that Mr Mehta, the head of the Bahai movement in India, came

up from Bombay to Delhi prepared to invite to lunch members of the Press in order to hold forth on his movement.

*The Cripps Mission failed and Cripps went back, but the Press Conference method stayed. So many problems engage the attention of people and so many interested parties wish to voice their respective points of view that the fashion set by Cripps has become a permanent feature in the life of the Press.*

Talking of Cripps' Press Conferences, I take the liberty of mentioning a few incidents of the many that brought him and me close to each other. In 1942, within a few hours after his arrival, he announced his first conference. It was an exciting occasion of eager optimism. But he was not disclosing the secret of his Declaration until a week after or until he had had his preliminary talks with the leaders—Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Jinnah. Every journalist present at the conference therefore put forth his best, and continued to do so at all the conferences held by him during the three weeks of his stay in India, at the conclusion of which he had to announce the failure of his Mission. He paid a high tribute to the Pressmen in India. I was singled out by him for special mention, and in fact, before he left the conference room on the last day, he came up towards me and said: "Iyengar, I shall not forget your part in these conferences. I hope we shall meet again." My reply was brief: "Thank you, Sir Stafford. Events take their own course."

## 16. MY 'INCENDIARY' QUESTIONS

I relate this last bit of conversation between Cripps and me just to recall what Eve Curie has mentioned about me in her book *Journey Among Warriors*. I have no visual

memory of the kind of person Eve Curie was, though she was present at the very many Press Conferences held in Delhi. So many foreign journalists attended those conferences, their total attendance exceeding over a hundred. But what she has chronicled in her book with particular reference to me I hope I deserve. She says on page 480 of her book: "The exuberant Hindu journalist with dazzling white turban always put incendiary questions to Sir Stafford Cripps...."

The first day of his Press Conference concluded with the following bit of conversation between us: "Could you say that the scheme which you have brought contains those elements of freedom and democracy which you have preached for so many years as a socialist leader?"

I paid more attention to Sir Stafford's reaction to my question than to the words of his reply. There was a pause, and instead of answering the question he parried it by asking in turn: "Are you a journalist or a lawyer?" This startled me, and I could only plead that I could claim no other status than that of a journalist. He was apparently playing for time to answer my question, which he did eventually as follows: "The scheme with which I have come contains the draft declaration of His Majesty's Government, with which I entirely agree." It was not clear whether what he had agreed to contained democratic freedom for India. So, in my incredulous way I attempted to ask some more questions which yielded no result that day. Two or three days later, at another Press Conference when I questioned him on some point he took time to answer me even then prefixing his remarks with—"Mr Iyengar, I attended the Federal Court this morning in order to sharpen my wits and be able to stand your cross-examination. But I must confess I am not able to catch up with you."

Then I asked: "Can you tell us clearly what you are going to give us? What is required is one simple word 'Freedom'." He replied: "We used words we thought simple—

*'full self-government'*. We followed it up by a definition which we believed would convey the right meaning. There is no conceivable doubt that this allows complete and absolute self-determination and self-government for India."

It seemed, whenever he hesitated to give an answer even for a second, there was a reluctance on his part to commit himself. On another occasion I enquired: "Are the proposals of His Majesty's Government over which you are having talks with the leaders subject only to acceptance or rejection by India?" (meaning that there was no modification). Sir Stafford replied: "Precisely, yes."

"May I then take it that the attitude of the British Government to India over the scheme is one of 'Take it or leave it!'?"

With half-closed eyes, Sir Stafford replied: "Exactly!"

I ejaculated: "Then may I know what you are negotiating?"

Suddenly, the Lord Privy Seal seemed to think that he had overshot the mark and there ensued a long pause. There was a chuckle among my journalist friends at the Conference.

The Sikh community, strangely enough, were the first to reject the Cripps scheme. They smelt Pakistan in it. Nor were they satisfied with the explanation given by Cripps in the talks behind closed doors. The cameraman at the entrance was anxious to click. Perhaps Cripps felt that sullen faces in the photograph might spell a bad omen for his negotiations with other leaders. So he suggested: "Gentlemen, let us all smile before the cameraman."

The next day at the Press Conference, I enquired: "Do you believe in making people smile as a cure for disappointment?" He did not immediately catch my point. I explained that there was a feeling among the Sikh delegates that they were forced to smile before the cameraman as they were coming out after their talks. The Pressmen present had a laugh, Sir Stafford heartily joining in.

Public interest in the Cripps negotiations was so great that on the day he held the largest Press Conference, a copy of the scheme given to each correspondent, there was a battery of questions from all sides. Some of my journalist friends a little envious perhaps of my questions, suggested that there should be a fair opportunity for all to obtain answers from Cripps. Sir Stafford readily agreed. Madame E. Curie has referred to my cross-examination of Sir Stafford on the words "Peoples of India" as implying a connotation that India consisted of more than one nation. Secondly, I confined myself to clause (e) of the draft declaration relating to Defence and suggested to Sir Stafford, for the success of his Mission, that he might agree to an Indian being appointed as Defence Member in close relation with the Commander-in-Chief who, in turn, would be in touch with the commanders of the different forces. I was terribly anxious that some settlement should be reached on this question and felt that if this point was agreed upon, the Congress might, in spite of Gandhiji's objection, accept his scheme even if it contained the poison of the separate nation theory. Sir Stafford's attitude betrayed a determination not to yield on this fundamental point of Defence. I asked: "If you really wish to obtain support for the scheme of post-war freedom on the basis of India's war-effort, would you deem it impossible to entrust the responsibility of India's defence to an Indian, especially when we are told that the Commander-in-Chief [Lord Wavell] is not opposed to such an arrangement?"

Sir Stafford replied emphatically in the negative. And I remarked: "The controversy will arise over clause (e) of your scheme relating to this question of Defence, and not so much on the post-war freedom or even the Constituent Assembly idea." Subsequent events have but confirmed this.

## 17. FACE-READING DEVICE

There was a time in my journalistic career when I attached very great reverence to statements made in public in the belief that they must necessarily be the whole truth. But as I grew in age and experience, I discovered that very often truth lay at the bottom of the proverbial well, and that the discerning journalist must go to great pains if he is to bring it to light. The good old days when anything emanating from official sources was believed to contain the whole truth have long since gone by. Instead, a generation has grown up that has learnt to sift the news carefully and assign its own values to items according to their respective sources. Looking back over thirty-five years, in which I have laboured as a journalist, I feel that nothing has been of greater service to me in getting at the truth than my own visual observation. That is to say, I trust my eyes even more than my ears. If the source which I tackle for news is of the cleverer kind, he tries to parry my question. Then I employ my eyes to watch the reactions that my questions produce in his face despite his glib talk. Very often this is an unfailing test.

In connexion with the famous Cripps negotiations of 1942, Gandhiji was in conference with him for no less than an hour and forty-five minutes behind closed doors. The whole world was waiting to hear of Gandhiji's reaction to the Cripps scheme, for that would be the principal deciding factor of those negotiations. So I planted myself right in the door-way of Sir Stafford's room to be able to shoot my questions first. As soon as Gandhiji emerged, I enquired if he was seeing Sir Stafford again. "No," came the reply. Then I asked as to what his reaction was. Gandhiji, looking more towards Cripps who was standing alongside, replied : "I have nothing to say."

I thought he was being evasive. But there were only a few seconds left within which to get at the truth, for Sir

Stafford Cripps himself was opening the door of the car under the portico and Gandhiji was about to enter it. I at once summoned courage and asked: "Is the Cripps scheme so good as to make you silent over it so soon?" And I watched the countenance of both the personalities to assess the position. Gandhiji gave a broad, understanding smile. And noticing this, Sir Stafford blurted out, "Oh, Mr Iyengar. What a bad boy!"

Now I felt absolutely convinced that Sir Stafford had failed to secure the support of the foremost leader of India. That really was the end of the Cripps Mission so far as the real news of it was concerned.

I shall relate another story to illustrate how the face is often a truer index of the mind than the spoken word. A few years ago there was a trade delegation from Japan which conducted negotiations with the representatives of the Government of India. Interest in these negotiations was great, and there were numerous enquiries over them from Osaka, London, Washington and other big cities. But the Japanese delegates whom I could get hold of had only a nodding acquaintance with the English language. Further, a strange thing happened. I put my questions in a manner so as to elicit the monosyllabic answer "Yes" or "No". But the Japanese delegates completely puzzled me. For, while saying "Yes" they shook their heads horizontally, and for saying "No" they shook them vertically! Which was I to trust, my ears or my eyes? So I adopted my practice of watching their faces every time. My manoeuvres I think succeeded against their mannerisms!

Press Conferences are all very well as far as they go. But no successful journalist can afford to confine himself exclusively to them, any more than to Press Bureaus and Secretariat corridors. He must touch life at all points, as

there is no knowing where or when news is made. Usually journalists get a number of invitations to social functions, to lunches, teas, dinners. I made it a point to attend as many of these as possible, not because I was gluttonous, but because I wanted to get news. It is at functions such as these that I met some people of consequence, and many of none. I joined them and talked with them, almost always succeeding in getting some bit of news or other which filled up an otherwise incomplete picture that I had already in mind.

## 18. INTUITION AND PERSEVERENCE

Apart from face-reading and hard work, the news gatherer with intuition can, with a spot of luck, beat his colleagues at their job, provided he takes courage into his hands. And that leads me to narrating how I got what I still consider my best news-scoop.

It was in the summer of 1931. The atmosphere was tense with the preparations for the Second Round Table Conference in London, and the despatch of delegates of various parties. Before Gandhiji agreed to go to London as the sole representative of the Congress, there were protracted negotiations between him and the Viceroy at Simla. While the Congress had committed itself to being represented at the Conference, Gandhiji, if he was to leave, would only do so on condition that a working agreement was arrived at in the matter of the peasants of Gujarat, the Red Shirts of the North-west Frontier and the Kisans of the U. P. There were hardly two hours for the last train to leave Simla. Every tinkle of the telephone where Gandhiji resided, made us anxiously hope that it be from the Viceregal Lodge, agreeing to the Congress demand. The patience of the journalists was getting exhausted.

I went into one of the rooms and was having a cup of



tea when Gandhiji's son Devadas Gandhi happened to come in and enquired if anyone in the company had experience of a London winter. This question at that particular moment was full of meaning to me. I scribbled my flash message and sent it to the Telegraph Office, situated at some distance. If by the time the peon reached the Telegraph Office there was no confirmation of my estimate of the situation I could easily cancel over the phone the booking of the message. Of course, the last train for Kalka actually steamed off without Gandhiji. But one never knew; for if Gandhiji was to go as a delegate, other arrangements could always be made. So I clung to my hope that the flash message would not have to be withdrawn.

Luck favoured me. Someone from Gandhiji's party came and asked for a copy of Bentley's Code. That was also significant as yet another pointer. Gandhiji's host was told that no arrangements need be made for the public prayer in the evening. And all this happened as Gandhiji was having the longest telephone conversation ever with the Secretary of the Home Department. So that clinched the issue. As soon as Gandhiji stepped out of the telephone room with a manuscript in hand, I rushed in and telephoned from the same telephone to the Telegraph Office releasing my flash message, while other correspondents were surrounding the Gandhian party for news which Gandhiji himself preferred to have issued from the Secretariat. It took over forty-five minutes for the news to be officially published from Gandhiji's residence or from the Viceregal Lodge. Anyway, my flash message reached not only all parts of India but even London about one hour ahead of the messages of other correspondents.

Occasionally, circumstances favour a journalist and if he is alert he can make the best of them. There were several incidents in my career which I made capital of.

In 1935 Sir Eric Teichmann, the British Consul at

Chungking and a famous traveller, was on his way to England *via* Delhi, after an adventurous journey of several weeks covering over 3,000 miles by road to Gilgit and from there by air to Delhi. The Foreign Office in Delhi had issued instructions to Press correspondents that no journalist should see him at the New Delhi aerodrome that night as "that would amount to an infliction on the health of the very aged visitor who must have rest". As soon as this note was issued placing an embargo on journalists meeting the distinguished visitor at the aerodrome, Shankar, the well-known cartoonist, got the brilliant idea of pulling our leg. He published in the *Hindustan Times* a cartoon in which I and my colleagues were depicted as attempting to defy the ban at the aerodrome and being chased out by the Home Member with a long stick. This cartoon appeared the morning after the arrival. But, alongside the cartoon, was the report of the exclusive interview that I was lucky enough to have had as representative of the Associated Press and Reuter, with Sir Eric Teichmann, not at the aerodrome, but at the Imperial Hotel where I caught him just as he was signing the register. Sir Eric not only did not dislike the idea of being accosted by a journalist but welcomed me into his room and asked for some information which I was able to give and, in return, gave me plenty of good copy about the very adventurous journey that he had had from Chungking right up to Gilgit. An account of this interview of mine with Sir Eric was given prominent publicity in the London Press as well. Restrictions are often the incentive for a scoop to the journalist.

## 19. ALERTNESS ALSO PAYS

There are, however, occasions when news comes to us as it were at a tangent, and it is here that alertness pays. One night in Simla, in 1923, when the news was received of the

kidnapping of Miss Ellis from Kohat by the trans-frontier tribesmen, I personally went to the Telegraph Office to book a cable to London at what we Pressmen call XXQ rate, or double urgent. Hardly had I done that, when I heard a conversation in Hindustani between two clerks on the meaning of the word "barrage". This was within a minute after Mr E. Howard the special correspondent of the *Pioneer* had booked a message and was returning from the Telegraph Office. The mention of the word "barrage" by the clerks made a special appeal to my news instinct. So, as I was walking back on the Mall to my residence, the idea flashed across my mind that perhaps the message booked by Mr Howard had something to do with the Sukkur Barrage for the construction of which the sanction of the Secretary of State was being awaited that week. So immediately on my return home I spoke to K. C. Roy and we both telephoned Sir Sydney Crookshank, Secretary of the Public Works Department, with the result that the news was confirmed. We flashed it immediately all over India and to London. The importance of this news was great because of the fact that sixteen crores of rupees were spent in the construction of the Barrage in which several thousands of people were employed over several years and the project brought prosperity to Sind and the Punjab States, now part of Pakistan. There was of course no manoeuvre in the obtaining of this news—only an instinct which I had to exploit.

## 20. CONTRETEMPS AT PRESS CONFERENCES

Sir Stafford Cripps called Press Conferences in order to explain the policy and objects of Government. The top ranking leaders of the Congress followed suit, feeling themselves obliged to hold conferences with the Pressmen in order to explain themselves to the public, particularly as Sir Stafford

Cripps had thrown the blame for the failure of his Mission on them. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the first to come out with an exciting story of the reasons for its failure. He was followed by Maulana Azad as Congress President and by Mr Rajagopalachari as one who had fought for the acceptance of the Cripps proposals.

There was a similar conference held by Mr Jinnah as President of the Muslim League, at his residence in a very elegant room rendered even more attractive by the exhibition on the mantelpiece of fresh apples from Kashmir. More longing was expended over the apples than over Mr Jinnah's anticipated statement. But a contretemps marred the occasion. Something had appeared in the *Hindustan Times* about the Muslim League during the Cripps negotiations; and Mr Jinnah, before commencing the Conference, wanted to know if there was any representative of the *Hindustan Times* present. When the representative Mr Krupandhi, now Editor of the *Indian News Chronicle*, Delhi, rather surprised, revealed himself, Mr Jinnah asked him to leave the conference, with the only explanation that the paper had not published a statement denying a certain report that had appeared in it and therefore, the League Working Committee had decided to ban the representative of the *Hindustan Times* from all its meetings. The Press Conference was held to state the attitude of the Muslim League in respect of the Cripps Mission. Mr Jinnah's explanation for the ban on the *Hindustan Times* was hardly convincing to the number of Pressmen assembled; there was an exchange of looks followed by a walk-out by all the Indian journalists present except three who stayed on because, as they later explained, they were also representing some foreign news agencies!

To complete the story of the *Hindustan Times* and the Muslim League, the tussle between the League leader and the paper continued for two years thereafter. Whenever

Mr Jinnah held any Press Conference during this interval no representative of the *Hindustan Times* was invited and the paper had to publish only the versions of news agencies. However, at the end of the Simla deliberations in July 1945 in connexion with the abortive Wavell proposals, there was a conference held by Mr Jinnah at Cecil Hotel. The ban on the *Hindustan Times* was mysteriously lifted, and the representative of the paper, now Durga Das, was admitted without any word of explanation by the President of the Muslim League. The impression left in the minds of the Pressmen was that the official ban of the League High Command was imposed or lifted according to the whims and fancies of Mr Jinnah.

This particular conference provided occasion for Mr Jinnah to refer to the League victories in the elections among Muslims to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, to the fear that Muslim interests would be by-passed by the Hindu majority Government and therefore there was no alternative but to provide for parity between Hindus and Muslims in the Central Executive. The conference was held soon after his two day talks with Pandit Pant who had been commissioned by Maulana Azad, the Congress President, to confer with the League President. The method adopted by Mr Jinnah was strange in every particular. He did not distribute any hand-out. Yet he had one copy of the statement he had prepared which he was anxious to read out at dictation speed. The impatient Pressmen got more impatient and at one stage questioned "When will all this end?" Mr Jinnah was anxious that his words should be taken down only by the representative of the principal news agency, the Associated Press, which also meant Reuters. He made the Agency representative read out from his shorthand notes to make sure that there was no possibility of any alteration being made in the copy. This done, Mr Jinnah put on his cap to indicate that the conference was over. We Pressmen

were all shocked. I ventured the query: "May I know if the facts and figures you have recited to us were placed by you before Pandit Pant when the Wavell Conference itself remained suspended?" Mr Jinnah (rather caught) replied: "I do not see how this question arises from my statement. Anyway I am not going to answer any questions!" So saying he left the table and made a beeline for the lift that took him up to his room. It was a strange Press Conference in every sense of the word. The Pressmen felt frustrated by Mr Jinnah's refusal to answer questions which obviously arose from his statement. Finally, when Lord Wavell announced the failure of his attempt and took the responsibility for it upon himself, and when Maulana Azad and Pandit Nehru had explained their reasons for the failure in the terms of Mr Jinnah's attitude, the same day Mr Jinnah held his Press Conference, this time distributing his statement but again closing it with the words: "I have nothing more to say and no answers to questions."

Other contretemps occurred at other Press Conferences disclosing that neither Pressmen nor those calling Press Conferences knew the limitations of such conferences. So long as the conference is handled with good humour and in an atmosphere of informality it is productive of the best results. Thus a good deal depends upon the tact and the resourcefulness of the person holding the conference, and the objective approach of journalists to secure more light than to subject the speaker to a cross-examination. Even such a leader of Press Conferences as Sir Stafford Cripps once felt outraged and threatened to close down a conference when an Indian journalist happened to doubt the *bona fides* of the British Government, with regard to his 1942 proposals. Nothing serious however happened, and the point was glossed over with a gentle admonition. There was, however, an instance when Sir Homi Mody as Member in charge of Supplies

during the war, had an unpleasant experience. At a Press Conference, he gave a summary of the report of Dr Henry Grady on the possibilities of industrial development in India. It was a report the text of which was not to see the light of day until after the war! The American correspondents had evidently known more of the report than was contained in the summary. One or two of them put interrogatories which offended Sir Homi Mody to such an extent that never afterwards did he hold any Press Conference during his term of office. Similarly, Sir Ardeshir Dalal, the Planning and Development Member, in a tour of the Provinces, met with a somewhat hostile reception at the hands of the Pressmen in Lahore. The questioner at the Conference suggested that Government were making a number of promises without power to put any of them through. Like Sir Homi Mody, Sir Ardeshir Dalal never met Pressmen afterwards.

Sir Mohamed Zafrullah Khan was once annoyed at a Press Conference over a question put by me and left the conference room in a huff. He had given an account of his mission to London as a member of the British War Cabinet to which he had been sent even though he was a Judge of the Federal Court. Sir Zafrullah explained Mr Churchill's part in the War Cabinet discussions and used the expression "wriggle out" twice as indicative of the British Prime Minister's cleverness in any situation. Several American correspondents present at the conference subjected him to a gruelling cross-examination in order to obtain copies suited to the respective angles of their newspapers. This irritated Sir Zafrullah. Towards the conclusion, some one asked whether the statement he had made could be attributed to him by name. He hesitated, and we were all surprised. I, therefore, explained the difficulty of Pressmen in reporting his views without his name being quoted. In so doing I asked: "How are we to wriggle out?" Sir Mohamed Zafrullah

Khan whose temper had been sufficiently frayed by the American correspondents grew red in the face and without even answering whether he could be quoted or not, walked out. An hour later, however, he gave permission for the publication of his name in the Press.

I had almost forgotten this incident. But when I visited Karachi in February 1949 along with the delegation from India under the leadership of Mr N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar for the Inter-Dominion Conference, Sir Mohamed Zafrullah Khan himself reminded us of it at a dinner he gave in honour of our leader. He added: "Those were very interesting times : Now everything has changed."

## 21. CONFERENCES BY NEHRU AND PATEL

As Principal Information Officer, it fell to me to arrange numerous Press Conferences, addressed by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and other Ministers. Pandit Nehru, soon after he became the leader of the Interim Government, held his first Press Conference to outline the policy on external affairs. But it was after the partition had been effected and a truly National Government was formed that he revived the practice with vigour and held a number of conferences, not only as Minister for External Affairs but also as the Prime Minister. He was ready to answer any question, whether it related to Kashmir or Hyderabad or Pakistan or the rehabilitation of refugees. A storehouse of information on all aspects of administration, Pandit Nehru comes to the Press Conference not always prepared. Author of *The Discovery of India* and *Glimpses of World History* with his historian's mind, his knowledge as Prime Minister and Chief Administrator, his mental resilience and acuteness, what need he has of any special preparation ! His explanations are as informative as authoritative. His desire to help the



Press to understand the national and international problems is great and no suggestion or request for a Press Conference is ever turned down. This is why foreign correspondents have had special opportunities of listening to him separately by themselves even at odd places and at odd times.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel, is not overfond of Press Conferences. He is generally silent, but when he does speak or when he holds a Press Conference, he provides a tremendous 'feast'. He says very little by way of introduction, for he assumes that Pressmen who attend the conferences have a general background of information on the subject. He therefore suffers no fools. His answers are always brief and to the point and his remarks invariably made with a pungent wit. On the question of the consolidation of States, he agreed to hold a Press Conference in January 1948 and it proved a success in that he was able to enlighten the public as to the implications of the arrangement entered into with the Rulers of States. But he would not hold any Press Conference on Hyderabad. He reserved his remarks for public meetings, until after the success of Police Action in the State and the abdication of the Nizam.

Other Ministers held Press Conferences more at the beginning of their career, when several of them wished to create confidence and sympathy with the public over their programmes. But as soon as they set themselves to work and discovered the difficulties ahead their ardour cooled down. Mr K. Santhanam, soon after his appointment as Minister of State for Railways and Transport, in his enthusiasm wished to hold two conferences a week—a proposition which I had to advise him against. He was persuaded to one conference a week, but in the light of actual experience, his conferences became even less frequent. However, there has been an increasing realization on the part of the Ministries of the Government of India as a whole that publicity through the Press can be

effective only when there is a definite policy with a well-thought out programme to be discussed.

## 22. CARTOONS AND SHANKAR

In the onward march of journalism the brush of the cartoonist is proving more potent than the pen of the editor. In fact, he has an advantage over every other class of journalist. The public are indulgent towards him, and he takes liberties with the public, but always from the stand-point of bringing home the truth. The importance of cartoons as a feature of journalism is of very recent development. In the beginning, say about 15 years ago, Indian politicians resented cartoons as published in the *Hindustan Times* whereas, the Britishers, whether in the I. C. S. or in any other walk of life, invariably enjoyed them even though several of the pictures were at their expense. However, every aspect of development must be allowed time in order that the basic ideas be accepted as essential. The much criticized Finance Member of the Government of India, Sir James Grigg, was the one person who enjoyed Shankar's Cartoons most, among all Executive Councillors. The Indian Executive Councillors, especially of the expanded Council variety, were very much chastened by the cartoonists. The more Lord Linlithgow addressed them as "patriotic" and as belonging to a "national government", the greater was the ridicule poured by the cartoonist over them. The cartoonist always enjoys the liberty of exaggerating the truth with his brush in order to emphasize it and he is therefore able to tickle the mind of the public even more than the journalist or the Special Correspondent. And whoever practises his art with a certain perfection of suggestiveness and criticism ranks among the highest in journalism, for his is as much a mission as a profession.

The career of Shankar Pillai who is acknowledged as

the ace cartoonist of Asia is remarkable. From his native town in Travancore he came to Bombay to study law and soon became Private Secretary to a businessman. He was good at drawing even as a boy and in Bombay he supplied a few indifferently thought out cartoons which appeared in the *Bombay Chronicle*. Pothan Joseph who was then on the editorial staff of the paper discovered the genius in him, and encouraged him with his own ideas to develop the art. Some time later when Pothan Joseph came to Delhi as the Editor of the *Hindustan Times*, he brought Shankar with him. Though Pothan Joseph himself had to leave the *Hindustan Times* shortly after, as he did so many other newspaper offices, Shankar remained an integral part of the institution until August 1946 when he broke away. Shankar tried his prentice hand at starting and running a newspaper, the *Indian News Chronicle* in Delhi with R. K. Dalmia as the proprietor, in competition with the *Hindustan Times* owned by G. D. Birla ; but Shankar did not take long to realize that he was not cut out for either promoting or running a daily newspaper. For a few months he vegetated until his friends from far and near encouraged him to develop his idea of running a cartoonist weekly like the *Punch* now called *Shankar's Weekly*. The inaugural ceremony of this journal was honoured by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru with a speech appropriately full of humour. Public life in India, particularly at the Capital, which had been starved of Shankar's cartoons for a long time once again regained its norm under the pitiless glare of truth as depicted by Shankar week after week.

At a party on the eve of the British Cabinet Mission's departure when Sir Stafford Cripps and I were conversing, I enquired which of the cartoons produced by Shankar during the three months of his stay he personally liked the most. He replied: "The best was where I was depicted as hiding myself underneath a bench and overhearing the confidential

talks that were proceeding between Azad and others. I liked this cartoon so much that I made Lord Wavell write for the original and obtained it. I am taking it with me." And Sir Stafford added: "Shankar is a delightful fellow. He is a remarkable man."

### 23. CONVULSIONS OF A CARTOONIST

This brings to my mind the conversation between Shankar, myself and A. H. Joyce at a dinner party held at the residence of Durga Das. Where does Shankar get his inspiration for his cartoons? How does he work them up? What are his own emotions and feelings as he does them? And what conclusions does he expect the reader to draw from them?

Such questions formed the subject of our conversation. It was Joyce who initiated the topic while I mentally recorded Shankar's answers uttered in his usually broken sentences.

*Joyce* : Tell me, Shankar, when do you get your inspiration for the cartoons? Is it usually in the morning or evenings or what?

*Shankar* : Let me tell you. I do not rise till 8 a.m. I do not bother about my day's work till about half-past ten. I am really a lazy fellow. I go along to my office with an absolutely vacant mind. I just depend on chance. Once in the office, I stroll from room to room, listening to the conversations that go along among Sub-editors or between Sub-editors and stray visitors, or lending an ear to what the chaprasis may happen to remark amongst themselves. It might even be that I might have picked up something from what I heard on the way to the office. In any case whatever I see or hear after I leave my house, begins to play on my mind.

Over an hour passes and the clock shows about noon. I know I have to do something but I do not know what I am

going to do. I touch a newspaper. I scan a headline. I see a book. I notice a magazine. There is nothing to catch on. Then I pace up and down the verandah for a few minutes. But I do not get a subject. I do not get an idea.

Then I look at the clock. It seems to be going fast. Oh ! I must do something. But I am not sure of what I am going to do. Suddenly I am possessed of an idea. It is not clear but it has a beginning. I feel a thrill. Then I pace up and down faster. Minor ideas begin to flow to shape the main idea. I feel I have got the thing. Then I dash to my room half-closing the door behind me.

I stand before the graph paper. I take up the penoil, draw a very rough outline of a sketch to see if I have caught the idea correctly ; I stand gazing at it.

If anybody were to knock at my door it would disturb me badly. For a whole hour I seem to convulse with ideas regarding the form and the details of the cartoon. My nerves on edge, I transmit my ideas on to the paper. But I pause. A simple cartoon is the best cartoon. Simplicity must convey the idea.

During the hour that I was sketching and erasing and sketching again and picturing to my mind the form of the cartoon, I find myself undergoing an emotional experience. If perchance somebody were to steal in and stand behind me I become a homicidal maniac ! For the slightest disturbance upsets the edifice of my idea and entire purpose of the cartoon.

Out of three hours of such struggle emerges an outline. Now I am free at last to give a little rest to myself before I give the finishing touches. A cup of coffee invigorates me. A puff of smoke soothes me. Then I sit down to complete my task. While I touch up the sketch I sharpen the angularities. The brush moves, as the detailed ideas flow. Now at last the sketch is finished. But what is to be the caption ? And should there be an explanation also ?

A cartoon without explanation is preferable but it

must have at least a caption. What is the caption to be? Now some news or other of the day or of the week is lying about which could fit in for explanation. It illustrates the subject of my cartoon. I do not take other peoples' ideas. The caption, the explanation, the central theme, the whole presentation are thus exclusively mine. As soon as the thing is over, I pass it on and forget myself until the next morning."

Shankar in the course of his remarks paused twice and said: "Look Joyce, after your famous Press Conference I felt like damning you but. . . . .?"

*Joyce* : Why didn't you ?

*Shankar* : The gentle thought ran through my mind that after all you were nice to me when I was in England. Really, having friends and remembering their kindness is the greatest obstacle. Now look at Iyengar here. He is a friend of mine. Once I felt like twitting him but then he is such a good fellow ; I recollected his friendliness towards me and desisted. There is always a battle between my thought and my action. I wish I knew very few friends in this world. Or rather I wish very few knew me while I knew many. At any rate I do not wish to be on intimate terms with any. Then I would feel detached.

*Joyce* : I really wish you had damned me for my Press Conference. What does it matter if you felt like caricaturing me? After all I am a civil servant and cannot be crushed. But I would have become better known through your cartoon.

*Shankar* : Yes. But that is one of my weaknesses which I have to get over. Perhaps it is a weakness with all the cartoonists, but I do not know. Why, the other day, such a great man as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru came to my house without any notice, spent two hours, insisted on having food with me and then left with such a gentle smile. What a nice man ! Now with such a man whenever I feel like damning him for any of his actions, I pause and then I do not proceed with the ideas.

*Question :* When did you make your first sketch ?

*Answer :* As a cartoonist it was in Bombay but the first drawing I made was when I was a school boy. One day a teacher belonging to the Tamil community like Iyengar gave me several strokes for something I had done. For four days I did not go to school. In my agony I drew a sketch of the teacher beating me. My friends who saw it thoroughly enjoyed it. Then for years I never drew anything. I was in the Law College in Bombay completing the course and then I joined a commercial firm. It was there that Pothan Joseph and I became friends. He introduced me to the *Bombay Chronicle*. When Pothan came to Delhi, he dragged me along with him. Since then I am here.

*Question :* During your last visit to England did you get any benefit from meeting the cartoonists there ?

*Answer :* Yes, in a way. I spent two days with Low, the famous cartoonist of Britain. He, however, did not find adequate time to look after me. But I met Leslie Grimes of the *Star* who was not only more kind but spent all his time with me, taking me to his friends, and explaining to me in front of cartoons how to project ideas. I also met Strube and enjoyed being in his company.

Before leaving, Shankar told us that Lord Wavell seemed to like best the cartoon headed "All is well that ends well". His Excellency in his letter to him remarked: "I hope you will prove prophetic."

Shankar added : "I also got a letter the other day from Mr. Alexander. I get appreciations almost every week I think, but I want to remain unseen, if not unknown."

Like our Journalists most of the cartoonists have so far come from South India. Thus it is that Vasu entered the field soon after Shankar. He is also a Travancorian. It was when Pothan Joseph was the editor of the *Indian Express* in Madras that cartoons by Vasu appeared in the paper and

when Pothan Joseph came to Delhi as the editor of *Dawn*, Vasu accompanied him. He is fairly well-known though not so famous as Shankar. Shankar's technique has remained unexcelled and never fails to excite the admiration of his readers. The taste for cartoons among newspaper readers has developed to such an extent that the *Hindustan Times* absorbed Ahmed who was formerly on the *Dawn*, for readers of the *Hindustan Times* had got accustomed to expect a cartoon almost daily. I know that several persons spoke to Devadas Gandhi and even wrote irate letters suggesting reconciliation with Shankar in order that his cartoons could reappear in Delhi's foremost Indian paper. But that was not to be. Both Sir Jeremy Raisman and Sir Archibald Rowlands as Finance Ministers made oblique references to the absence of Shankar from the Delhi newspaper field in regretful terms on the floor of India's Parliament. But the *Hindustan Times* had made up its mind not to come to terms with Shankar. They had broken off completely, from the 24th August 1946—the very day on which it was announced that Pandit Nehru would head the Interim National Government. Anyway, with Ahmed now in the *Hindustan Times* and Shankar in *Shankar's Weekly* the newspaper readers of Delhi have occasion to watch and compare the two productions. In the provincial capitals other cartoonists are springing up. Such papers as the *Hindu*, Madras, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, the *Bombay Chronicle*, the *Tribune* from the Punjab and the *Free Press Journal*, Bombay, and also weeklies whether in English or in vernacular like the *Blitz* Bombay, the *Orient*, Calcutta, and the *Ananda Vikatan* and *Kalki* in Madras have been vying with one another in publishing cartoons in order to satisfy their readers' taste. It may be said that in the present stage of journalism a newspaper can come out even without editorials but not without cartoons. They give within a small space a new insight into current events, and expose the foibles of those who display themselves on the public stage. The more



cartoonists we have with skilled technique and knowledge of affairs, and more pep and tang will journalism develop.

Viceroy, from the time of Lord Willingdon, took an increasing interest in cartoons, particularly Shankar's, as they provided entertainment and education and served as guidance in the matter of public opinion. Successive Viceroys have not departed from the Willingdon tradition and often sent for Shankar in order to know his mind. But at no time has Shankar on that account deflected from the path of mirroring popular opinion in this country. He has remained firm as a rock, his ideas always emanating as from the opinion of the man in the street. Viceroys and high officials of Government in several Ministries, and public leaders have acknowledged the powerful influence of the cartoons of Shankar and even tried, and still try, to curry favour with him.



## PART III



## 1. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

My association with the Associated Press of India which endured for nearly 20 years had a very interesting start, in that the offer came to me from the founder of the Agency, Mr K. C. Roy, in a telegram addressed to me in Allahabad, while I was staying temporarily at Lahore, watching the proceedings of the Hunter Committee on the Punjab Disturbances. A Bombay representative of the Agency, Mr P. P. Iyer, and myself were staying at the time in the same hotel ; and immediately on receipt of the telegram from Roy, I had a conversation with Mr P. P. Iyer in order to acquaint myself with the detailed working of the Agency. This conversation enabled me to make up my mind, and accordingly I sent my telegraphic reply accepting the offer. Even P. P. Iyer could not reveal to me all that I was able to learn as regards the origin and the growth of this News Agency. What I am able to record here is what I obtained from my talks with K. C. Roy himself and from some of the documents I went through during my service in the Agency.

It was in 1906 when in England they had introduced what was called the Multiple Address Telegraph System that an attempt was made in India by Roy, while he was functioning as a correspondent for Indian newspapers, to introduce that system to facilitate the work of the Press. Lord Minto, who was approached by a deputation of prominent journalists including K. C. Roy, readily agreed, and there began a network of news service by correspondents functioning mainly between Simla and the newspapers at important centres. They included Everard Coats of the *Statesman*, Sir Edward Buck of the *Englishman*, and Dallas of the *Indian Daily News*—all of Calcutta papers and they formed a formidable combination against Hensman who represented the *Pioneer* which was known to be the British I. C. S. mouth-piece. But it was

three years later in 1908 that Mr Roy evolved a scheme for a news agency on the lines of the Associated Press of America. One night when all Simla was fast asleep Mr Roy who was staying in his house at Maudeville woke up Sen. Mr (now Sir) Usha Nath Sen was then a mere interested listener. Mr Roy explained to him the outlines of the scheme as follows :

"You know of the Associated Press of America. Why not take advantage of this multiple telegraph system and call ourselves the Associated Press of India and in its name function at important centres ? I shall be at Simla, you will be at Calcutta, Amulya Chandra Chatterji will be in Bombay and B. P. Ghosh in Madras. We can supply news from all these centres to the newspapers and I am sure we can succeed." Mr Sen agreed and a little later the Agency with the telegraphic address "Associated" commenced to function as planned. It synchronized with the agitation against the partition of Bengal when leaders from Bengal including Sir Surendranath Banerji and Bipin Chandra Pal were touring the country. Lord Minto was anxious to appease the people of Bengal and incidentally there was considerable sympathy for the entrepreneurs of this new venture in agency journalism in India. Newspapers also began to realize the increasing importance of the Agency in the spread of news and one after another subscribed to its service. This fact was seized upon by Sir Edward Buck who came into working partnership with Mr Roy himself. Sir Edward Buck was then the correspondent of the *Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, besides the *Englishman*, Calcutta and the *Rangoon Gazette*. It was some time later that he was appointed Agent for Reuters with the Government of India.

Mr Everard Coats left the *Statesman* on his appointment by Reuters to organize supply of Reuters news service. The Government of India, anxious to help that Agency, went into a deal with it whereby news from Britain and other foreign countries was to be received with the aid of subscription

from the Government of India. Hence was introduced what was called the G. P. telegrams (Government and Press Telegrams) whereby about fifty officers of the Government of India situated at several stations in India and her frontiers received news from Reuters Agency, the telegraph office receiving it and distributing it to the various recipients.

## 2. INDIAN NEWS AGENCY AND BUREAU

A year later in Madras a famous banking concern named Arbuthnot and Company crashed and thousands of people suffered financially. This news was not reported by the Madras Government to the Government of India. It was noticed however in the *Madras Mail* received in Simla after five days by an I.C.S. officer in the Finance Department. This led to a discussion between the Government of India and Mr Coats, who was asked to organize the Indian News Service for supply of news to a few important officers in the same manner as Reuters Service did. This was how what was known in Government of India circles as Indian News Agency Service (I.N.A.) was started and was continued as long as the British were in power. The amount of subscription paid to Reuters and the Indian News Agencies was entered in the budget statement under the heading 'Miscellaneous'—"Subscriptions to periodicals". It was only in 1927 or 1928 when Mr Sadanand started his Free Press of India as a news agency service that some attention was paid by Members of the Legislative Assembly giving notice of cut motions intended to raise discussions under demands for grants. But each time the discussion was postponed. There were, however, questions asked at the question hour almost every year since then. The invariable answer from Government was that it was not a subsidy to Reuters or the Associated Press but payment for services rendered. The Indian Government in 1948 took courage

to discontinue these services and thereby effected a saving.

Sir Edward Buck was from the very beginning impatient of the growing importance of Mr E. Coats, and realizing the intrinsic merits of the Associated Press of India News Service, became more and more tied up with Roy. When, therefore, in 1913 Mr Coats made his negotiations with Mr Roy for the purchase of his Agency, Sir Edward Buck played an important role. The amount paid to Mr Roy is not known but perhaps it was not large. One of the terms of Mr. Coats taking over the Associated Press was that the salaries of the Indian officers at various branches should be placed on a progressive scale. But it did not take long for Mr Roy to realize that this part of the Agreement would not be honoured. Shortly before the First World War in 1914 an objection was raised by Reuters to an increase of salary in the case of Usha Nath Sen. Mr Roy, however, stood by Usha Nath Sen and fought it out. In this attempt he had to quit his own Associated Press and he founded what was later known as the Indian News Bureau. I joined journalism in 1915 in Madras as News Editor of the *Indian Patriot*—edited by Dewan Bahadur C. Karunakara Menon who had been Joint Editor in the *Hindu* previously; I witnessed the rivalry between the two news agencies in India—the Associated Press with the support now of the Government of India because Mr Coats had purchased it on behalf of Reuters, and the Indian News Bureau run by Mr K. C. Roy in competition with the Associated Press of which he had been the founder. I could even see in front of my office the peons of the two news agencies fighting with each other in order to be the first to deliver messages. In the fury of competition both the agencies suffered financially. Mr Roy had to sell away his two houses in Simla and undergo much mental worry in consequence. Newspapers in India also became rather fitful in their support to his Indian News Bureau. While some of the European-owned newspapers were making regular payment for his news service, certain Indian papers



began to bargain for reduced subscription. Even the intervention of Sir Surendranath Banerji and the help of men like Sir Ali Imam was not of much help to Mr Roy in tiding over the difficulties.

During the early years of the War, Mr Coats went to England and explained to Reuters the set-up of the news organization in India. It was then decided that the best arrangement would be to buy up the interests of both Mr Roy and Mr Coats and merge them in the name of the Eastern News Agency of Reuters Ltd. Thus came into existence the Eastern News Agency, owned by Reuters, functioning, first, as the agency for distribution of foreign news in India to the newspapers ; secondly, for supply of Indian news to the newspapers in India as the Associated Press ; thirdly, supply of Reuters news to Government of India as G. P., fourthly, supply of Indian news to the Government of India officials as Indian News Agency, and lastly, reporting news to London and other foreign countries in the name of Reuters. In the light of his bitter experience with Indian-owned newspapers, Mr Roy was willing to come to terms with Reuters, especially as they were prepared to make him Director-in-charge of both the Associated Press and I. N. A. Services, with freedom to decide the salaries of the officers of the Company, along with Sir Edward Buck.

The first World War gave considerable fillip to both Reuters and the Associated Press Services. Indeed, they had the monopoly of the field in India which, though frequently shaken, lasted for three decades. The end of the Second World War, however, saw the beginning of the end of that monopoly. India's attainment of political freedom in August 1947 was followed by efforts on the part of newspapers to have their own national news agency uncontrolled by any foreign interests. Hence the decision of the Indian Newspaper Society creating the Press Trust of India which, as a result of negotiations with Reuters in the summer of 1948, became

the owners of the Associated Press of India. During these three decades within India the Associated Press grew in importance both with the newspapers and with the politicians. The Punjab Disturbances of 1919, Mahatma Gandhi's entry in the Congress whose leadership he assumed almost from the day of the tragedy of Jalianwalla Bagh in 1919, the agitation against the Rowlatt Bill, the Indemnity Bill, the Congress session of Nagpur in 1920 where Mahatma Gandhi assumed the *de facto* leadership of the Indian national organization, his interviews with Lord Reading shortly before the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1921—these and other developments provided news and more news for papers in India and in foreign countries.

I had gone to Simla for the first time in 1919 on behalf of the *Independent* of Allahabad to report the proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council. After this assignment, when I was at Allahabad, telegrams were received by Syed Hussain, the editor of the *Independent*, from both Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Malaviya asking him to spare my services for the Congress Enquiry Committee, then at Lahore, in the preparation of the Report on the Punjab Disturbances. Hence my visit to Lahore and stay in the same hotel as Mr P. P. Iyer who represented the Associated Press to report the proceedings of the Hunter Committee. For my part I was largely responsible for providing the Congress Enquiry Committee with enough material from the proceedings of the Hunter Committee in order to complete its Report and publish it ahead of the Hunter Committee's Report.

Before leaving Lahore I visited Amritsar and took leave of Pandit Motilal Nehru prior to joining the Associated Press in Delhi early in January 1920. Mr Roy and I had not met before. When I entered Maiden's Hotel where the office was located, he was about to go on his daily round of the Secretariat then situated in Old Delhi. He immediately telephoned some one in the Secretariat, and after introducing me to Sir Edward Buck and Mr Digby of the Eastern News

Agency plied me with questions. Mr Durga Das who had joined the Associated Press only five months earlier and whom I had seen at Simla in connexion with the Indemnity Bill and also at Amritsar during the Congress session was glad to see me. Mr Digby did not stay long and had to return to England. He was succeeded by Mr A. H. Kingston as Managing Director. He died in 1923 of a fall from a moving train near Karnal Railway Station, the other occupant in the compartment at the time being Sir Edward Buck. They had both gone out on a shooting excursion. The body of Mr Kingston was buried in the cemetery opposite Qudisia Garden, members of Government including Sir Mohd. Shafi being pall-bearers.

Sir Roderick Jones, Chairman of Reuters Ltd., visited India in 1924 on a tour of inspection of the Agency's offices. During his stay in Delhi I acted as Secretary and had opportunities to watch him at work, his extreme caution in taking decisions and even in conversations. It was in the course of a talk with me regarding the difficulties of officers and staff in the Company that I persuaded him to introduce the Provident Fund system which has continued till today and has been extended recently to peons as well. He was anxious that the news services of Reuters and the Associated Press should be placed on an integrated basis in order to effect economy in expenditure. In fact both the services were being run from Delhi by Mr Roy which meant myself and Durga Das in actual day-to-day operation, Sir Edward Buck receding slowly from the picture partly because of his advancing years and also because news sources became more and more non-official and Indian. The impression which Sir Roderick Jones formed was that the combination of Roy, Sen, Iyengar and Durga Das had to be maintained in order to retain the efficiency and supremacy of Reuters for the two services in India. The only change made was that the designation of Managing Director was changed into General Manager for Reuters in the East, and the appointment of Mr W. J. Moloney to it was

announced. This change was actuated also by the need for separate control of the managerial side from the editorial, as it was difficult for one person to be in charge of both for such a fast developing news service not only in India but also adjoining countries like Burma and Ceylon. Moreover, a closer watch and control over news was felt necessary because of the efforts of Mr Sadanand to run a parallel news organization in India which he named the Free Press News Agency.

### 3. THE FREE PRESS AGENCY

The Free Press agency owed its origin mainly to the rupee ratio controversy in support of one-shilling-four-pence over which Bombay was keenest, and also because Mr Walchand Hirachand on behalf of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company was anxious to promote and secure the goodwill of the India Government to his demand for reservation of coastal traffic to Indian-owned vessels. On both these questions the Associated Press of India as a subsidiary of Reuters was unable to do anything by way of propaganda but confined itself to reporting the trends only to the extent that they constituted news. On the other hand, the Free Press agency financed by capitalists in Bombay, showed some life both in Bombay and Calcutta but was not able to make much headway in Delhi. Mr Bidu Sen Gupta was the Calcutta representative of the Free Press News Agency and the support he received in Bengal was symptomatic of the Bengali sentiment in favour of, as it was claimed, an Indian news service as against the Associated Press which was owned by a foreign concern. Mr Sadanand invaded Delhi and personally ran the service for three months during the budget session of 1929. His ambition to compete with the Associated Press in all its aspects was demonstrated by his attempt to run a news service

analogous to the Indian News Agency telegrams service. But he failed to continue the competition after the budget session was over. Mr Sadanand had, however, shown uncommon courage and amazing energy in running his news service almost single-handed. But he failed against the combined efficiency and huge resources of the bigger organizations, the Associated Press of India and Reuters.

In 1928 Mr Roy visited England as a member of the delegation sent by the Government of India in order to discuss with the Secretary of State for Colonies the treatment meted out to Indians in East Africa. This provided an opportunity for Sir Roderick Jones to finalize the arrangement for the better control and working of the Agency services in India. During his stay in London Mr Roy fell ill for several weeks and was attended to by Mrs Dorothy Roy, the widow of Mr P. K. Roy. Shortly after his recovery Mr K. C. Roy married her, the news coming to his friends in India as a matter of complete surprise. It was Sir B. L. Mitter who broke the news to me which I could hardly believe, for Simla-Delhi society had come to regard both Mr Roy and Sir U. N. Sen as confirmed bachelors! At any rate Sir Usha Nath Sen today at the age of seventy is still a bachelor. Mr Roy returned after his work with the Kenya Delegation and confirmed the news of his marriage. Among many friends Sir Sivaswami Iyer in one of his letters to him wrote as follows :—  
“I congratulate you on having joined the ranks of Benedicts.”

#### 4. DELHI AS EDITORIAL HEADQUARTERS

After Mr Roy's return to India, he received a communication from Reuters confirming the news arrangement whereby the administrative headquarters of the Eastern News Agency were transferred from Delhi to Bombay while the editorial headquarters continued to remain in Delhi with Mr Roy in

charge. The following was the arrangement of work between the news side and the business side of the Agency.

1. Mr Roy will correspond freely with the Branches on news matters criticizing and directing their news activities.

2. He will continue as in the past to correspond with the newspapers on news matters and to enter into news arrangements with them.

3. Mr Roy will not conclude the financial part of such arrangements direct with the newspapers and Governments, without the previous sanction of the General Manager.

4. All arrangements with branches or with newspapers or with any one else involving revenue or expenditure must be sanctioned beforehand by the General Manager, except urgent emergency expenditure, which must be ratified at the earliest moment by the General Manager.

5. Mr Roy will remain in close contact with the General Manager, by letter and telegram, with a view to the maintenance of the utmost co-operation with him.

6. Mr Roy's special function will be, as in the past, to represent the E. N. A. with the Government of India.

7. Mr Roy will also use any delegated authority in administrative matters which the General Manager may give him from time to time.

This memorandum recognized Mr Roy's editorial importance but while relieving him of the managerial control, it weakened his position in the administrative field. Mr Roy very often chafed under this new arrangement but had to accept the inevitable. The position of Sir (then Mr) U. N. Sen was always uncertain though he remained constant, whatever the fortune of the organization might have been. In fact, in a letter in February 1929, Sir Roderick Jones stated as follows :—

“As regards Mr Sen, I am very glad you asked him not

to take any decision until Mr Moloney arrived. It is for Mr Moloney to say what in the circumstances is best to be done in fairness both to Mr Sen and the Associated Press. As you probably are aware, I never attempt to lift a finger against any member of the staff who feels that he can better himself by going elsewhere. So long as he can do so consistently with his loyalty to an organization to which he has long been attached, which must have contributed largely to his experience, and consistently with general honourable conduct, a man is entitled to do what he believes to be the best for himself.

I note what you said to Mr Sen about his succeeding you in due course, both in position and in salary. My only comment upon that for the moment is that I hope we can exclude such a contingency from our minds for many years to come. I cannot imagine anything but your health interfering with your occupancy of your present office, and I can only beg you to treat your health with the utmost care and consideration.

Whatever may happen in the case of Mr Sen, I should be very sorry indeed if any feeling of perturbation manifested itself or even existed, in however latent a form, amongst the staff of the Associated Press, whether juniors or not. No existing member of the staff, no matter what his rank, has the slightest reason to fear anything in consequence of the recent reorganization, provided he does his duty faithfully by the Associated Press. On the contrary, as I see it, and this is my fixed intention also, the position and the prospects for every man, who devotes himself zealously and conscientiously and capably to the service of the Agency, will be ever so much better under the reorganization than they conceivably could have been otherwise. It is not Reuter's practice, and we have nearly a century of tradition behind us, which speaks for itself, nor is it in accordance with my temperament or ideas, to deal otherwise than honourably and generously by men who are faithful to the cause to which they are attached.

Knowing Reuters and me as you do, you will not, I am persuaded, require yourself to be told this. But I hope you will make it clear to any of your friends who may be faint-hearted or doubting. They, after all, cannot be expected to know and have the same faith in Reuters as you and I do and have."

## 5. THE A. P. I. MONOPOLY

Newspapers in India, both foreign and Indian-owned, began to show considerable enterprise by sending correspondents to Delhi and Simla because the Congress had accepted the Council entry as part of its programme to further the efforts for forcing the withdrawal of the British power. Not only correspondents of newspapers in India, but also correspondents of newspapers from foreign countries like the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* of London, and the *Morning Post* were present. As for Indian-owned newspapers they were being served with news sent by me and Durga Das as Special Correspondents while we continued to be in the employ of the Associated Press. The running of these two parallel news services by us both, in addition to the Associated Press and Reuters, became the subject of correspondence between the editor of the *Times* and the India Office in London, particularly because Reuters was sweeping the field in London and the *Times* representative in Delhi and Simla could not catch up. This naturally led to a discussion in the first instance between Reuters in London and Mr Moloney and Mr Roy in India. Sir Roderick Jones cabled to Mr Roy in the summer of July 1931 that the Special Correspondent services run by Messrs Iyengar and Durga Das be terminated. Mr Roy sent the following note in reply :

"The object in allowing Iyengar and Durga Das to work as special correspondents from Simla and Delhi was to keep out the other news competitions and preserve our monopoly



to the utmost limit, as also to acquire some control and authority over independent news service in the interests of our News Agency—it can be easily claimed that this object has given good results on the whole.

2. If the service is abruptly terminated, we shall be handing over the control of independent news service to others and also losing a source of revenue which can be profitably husbanded by the Company in the mutual interests of the Company and the officers concerned.

3. Iyengar and Durga Das have each to give adequate notice to their respective papers in case they decide to sever their connection with them of over 10 years.

4. Durga Das being on leave in Europe and not likely to return till the middle of September, no immediate action is possible on Sir Roderick Jones' cable.

5. The question of a progressive scale of pay for Iyengar and Durga Das is long overdue, and before we take this up, we should decide the future relationship of their newspaper connections in the light of the points indicated above.

6. The sources of news in Simla and Delhi are becoming more and more unofficial and less and less official. The connections and relations of Iyengar and Durga Das with the principal Indian newspapers have considerably helped the Company to maintain its news relations with several public men all over India and thereby ensure the efficiency and promptness of our service. Any abrupt change in the position of the Special Service, especially during the present transitional period, may lead to undesirable results."

Sir Roderick agreed and the arrangement was allowed to continue on the condition that it was not to be competitive but remain only supplementary to the Associated Press and that it was remunerative and helped to keep out competitions from the field. So long as Mr Roy was alive this arrangement was not disturbed. He died in September 1931, and shortly after, the attitude of London stiffened in respect of the Special

Correspondent services. It was, however, decided that the Company should compensate me and Mr Durga Das and take over the general control of these Special Correspondent services in order to regulate their character. This decision was reached when I was about to sail for Europe on a holiday tour. Actually the day before I was to sail for Europe I was presented, in Bombay, with a copy of the terms of the Agreement and was asked to sign it binding me thereby to a period of service for five years. The terms were no doubt reasonable from the salary point of view, but there was a catch in that there was no mention of my headquarters. I therefore insisted on a clause specifying my headquarters at Delhi and Simla. I also informed Durga Das of this fact before I sailed for Europe for he had to enter into a similar agreement. To my great relief, when I was in Rome I received a cable from him that my demand had been accepted and that he had signed the Agreement. Both Reuters and the Associated Press at that time were anxious to secure the services of Durga Das and myself particularly as there was increasing competition all round and the principal news centre of the Agency had to be safeguarded against it. Newspapers did not notice any change in the character of our Special Correspondent service which continued for four years till the end of 1935 when, at the instance of the Management, we had to stop it.

## 6. LONDON TIMES' COMPLAINT

The instructions to stop our Special Correspondents service to the newspapers was received by a cable from London sent by Sir Roderick Jones and admitted of no modification. It was the same Sir Roderick Jones who in November 1924 had agreed "that there are certain advantages in this work being done by members of E. N. A. and not by outsiders competing with that agency, and there are grounds for allowing

the present practice to continue, so long as it does not so grow as to be ungovernable or create a vested interest". Under the terms of the agreement we had no alternative but to give notice to the newspapers terminating our long connexion. The *Hindu*, through its editor Mr Rangaswami Iyengar, wrote to me handsomely as follows :

"We need hardly say with how much regret we are terminating an arrangement which has existed for so many years and in which you, as our representative, have discharged your duties with such success, tact, and ability. But I need hardly assure you that the happy personal relations which you have cultivated with Srinivasan, myself and others will not terminate on any account nor our hearty good will and desire to continue our cordial relations under all circumstances."

Mr Srinivasan, the Proprietor, followed it up with a similar letter of appreciation and suggested that I should accept from him a gold watch and chain to serve as a memento of the *Hindu's* appreciation of my work. Other newspapers wrote in similar strain and were sincerely sorry at the severance of my long and useful connexion with them.

The factors that contributed to the decision of Reuters that we should discontinue the service were :

1. The attitude Sir James Grigg, Finance Member, assumed towards Durga Das and myself because of our growing influence among politicians and also in the Press and in the Government of India Secretariat.

2. The handicaps felt by correspondents of Anglo-Indian newspapers in Delhi and Simla in getting news which became more and more unofficial.

3. The almost total failure of the correspondents of the *London Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post* in either collecting news or being able to interpret the events that were developing fast.

Mr Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of the *Times*, London,

wrote in April 1931 to the India Office as follows .

"The *Times* has frequently found itself debarred from the prompt and adequate reporting of Indian developments by the fact that, in the distribution of news, the Government of India always, or nearly always, favours the Associated Press of India and through it, the Reuters' Agency. It is, perhaps, natural that the officials in Delhi should feel the need of a central agency through which all material intended for publication should pass. The Department of Public Information, in arranging its liaison with and distribution to the Press, seems to think primarily of the needs of the Indian vernacular newspapers.

Our Special Correspondent in India has commented several times upon the inefficiency of the Department of Public Information and the poor system of liaison in Delhi. It certainly seems necessary to protest against the growing tendency to use the Associated Press of India (which for us means Reuters) as the only channel for the distribution of official news. The *Times* policy has always seemed to rely upon Reuters for the text of speeches or documents but otherwise to cover all news of importance by its own means. Our Special Correspondent now reports the following instances of the A. P. I. monopoly :—

(a) After Gandhi's third interview with the Viceroy a short communique was issued from the Viceroy's House. This was handed over to the A. P. I. It was not handed to the *Times* correspondent or to the other special correspondents in Delhi. The result was that our correspondent was on the point of cabling to the *Times* that no official announcements had been made when he heard accidentally of the communique in question.

(b) It was seriously proposed in Government circles that the text of the Agreement reached between the Viceroy and Gandhi should be handed over to the A. P. I. for distribution and it was only on urgent representation that copies were

made available to special correspondents in Delhi. Had the first course been adopted it would have been impossible for our correspondent to have commented on the terms of the agreement until a day later.

(c) When another correspondent asked the Census Bureau for rough figures indicating the salient points on the Census of 1931 he was told that the Associated Press had distributed them to the different papers.

(d) Our Special Correspondent also mentions that he received through the kindness of the Viceroy, his speech to the Chamber of Princes on His Excellency's arrival at the Council House at 11 a.m. while his official copy arrived at his hotel fairly late in the afternoon. The A. P. had received their copy in advance early enough to dispatch their message as soon as the Viceroy had begun his speech.

The correspondent has not complained on personal grounds. His relations with both are extremely friendly. He has never approached a Government official without getting the utmost help. It is to be hoped that those in authority at Delhi will appreciate the *Times* methods of work and its reluctance to play second fiddle to another Agency. In his letter of March 19, our Special Correspondent has mentioned further objections to the Government's habit of using the A. P. I. as an official mouthpiece."

This note was forwarded by the India Office to the Secretary, Home Department, Government of India. In the course of a covering letter it was pointed out :

"What is occupying Mr Dawson's mind is not the relations of the Government of India with the *Times* representative in India in particular, but the Government's relations with the representatives of prominent British papers in general. Conditions in India are no doubt rather different from those obtaining here, but it may conceivably be of some use to you to know that here we avoid giving any preferential

treatment to agencies. When we have official information to give out in the way of notifications, notices and so on, we send them direct to all the prominent dailies, including such provincial dailies as have Offices in London, and also to the Agencies, the Central News, Press Association, Reuters, etc. It is only when time presses and it is not possible to send them to each paper individually that we make use of the agencies only, as distinct from the papers, in order that the latter may all be equally treated through a common medium. This, of course, is quite apart from the special occasions when we get hold of a member of the editorial staff of one or more of the leading papers in order to give confidential information for the purpose of the better production of a leading special article on any current topic. If it were possible in India to treat the representatives of the prominent British and American papers much as we do, i.e. direct and not through the Associated Press of India, in respect of Government Communiques etc., I fancy this would largely meet Mr Dawson's point in the first paragraph of his letter.

His second point—the problem of getting the Government of India's point of view into the vernacular Press is not one on which I think, we can usefully comment here; the problem presumably is not so much that of providing water for the the horse to drink as of inducing the horse to drink it; but it may be of interest to you to know that the editor of the *Times* is personally disturbed about the problem."

## 7. GRIGG AND HALLETT JOIN

Against this background it was easy for the Finance Member of the Government of India, Sir James Grigg, to bring about a crisis in our relations with the Associated Press. He himself was encountering defeat after defeat in India's Parliament. He was being very severely criticized in the Press

and could not be liked by Indian leaders. He was in almost daily skirmish with the front bench leaders on the Opposition. Several incidents took place estranging the relations between the Government and the popular party. Sir James therefore developed prejudice against almost everything Indian and began to suspect even his own shadow in India. He was the one Finance Member all of whose budgets were thrown out by the Assembly throughout his term and certified every time as an emergency measure by the Governor-General.

One day after a heated exchange of words on the floor of the House between himself and Mr Satyamurti, Sir James called me aside in the lobby and suggested that I should keep out the incident from the Associated Press service. I could not accept the suggestion and pointed out that the Agency would be failing in its duty if it blacked out the incident. He pleaded that the incident was too trivial and need not be treated seriously by a news agency like the Associated Press. He added: "Why not leave the Satyamurti propaganda to the Free Press?" I made it clear to him that it was difficult to oblige him. Thereupon he took a rather determined attitude and warned—"Remember your Agency is helped by Government's subscription." To this I said that I would speak to Mr Moloney.

A few weeks later Mr Moloney informed us that Sir James Grigg had reported to Sir Roderick Jones in London about the unhelpful attitude of the Associated Press.

On November 21, 1935, I had the following recorded in my Diary :

"Moloney gave out that Special Service is very paying, its potential being Rs. 1,000/- per mensem. But Hallett and Findlater Stewart having approached Roderick Jones in London and Roderick Jones having agreed to it, it must cease. But this will not affect our position and there will be no question of retrogression in the case of one who is an integral part of the organization. He will not however commit himself

on paper for that would connote lack of mutual confidence which is not the case ; as the Company relies on us, we must progress with the Company's own progress."

Next day, November 22, 1935, I had the following recorded in my diary :

"Resumed talk with Moloney who had just returned from Hallett [Home Secretary], Stephens [Director of Public Information] and Grigg [Finance Member]. He repeated that mine and Durga's position was quite sound in Company and Durga could go abroad in summer 1936 and I could go in 1937. He wanted us to visit important centres to stimulate news service and that Delhi-Simla Office should regard itself as the headquarters, news side, in the whole organization. Moloney was indignant at the mere suggestion to keep a record of our talk as there is no necessity."

One year passed with the position becoming more and more uncertain, but in December 1936 Mr Moloney wrote to us specifying the terms on which the Company was prepared to re-engage us as from April 1937. This specified that we should serve at any of the Company's offices or stations, meaning thereby that Delhi-Simla would not be our headquarters. Meanwhile, another development had taken place. Mr Turner, a mere accountant unconnected with the news side, was appointed in Delhi as Deputy General Manager, with powers co-extensive with the General Manager. We visited Bombay and had discussions with Moloney. Our requests for elucidation of the position did not meet with a satisfactory response from him. Mr K. Srinivasan, the Editor of the *Hindu*, was apprised of the situation and he tried to intervene. As a matter of fact, he was about to start for Bombay for pursuing the discussion because he felt, as he stated in a telegram he sent to Mr Moloney, that the interests of the newspapers were involved and he was anxious that the service of the Associated Press should not suffer in value



which might be the case if we left the Agency. But Mr. Moloney allowed no discussion even with him by telegraphing to him that the Board of Reuters did not contemplate modification of the terms of its offer for our re-engagement.

While in Bombay, we met several friends including Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas, and Mr Jinnah. They all appreciated the grounds on which we were taking the grave decision to sever our connexion with the Agency. Mr Jinnah remarked: "Stick to your principles, whatever the cost." They all went so far as to remark that the Associated Press without us two (we were often described as twins) would not be a news agency but a clearing house of the Government of India communiques. Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas offered to finance a scheme for the running of a news agency in case leading newspapers like the *Hindu* would promise to subscribe to its service. This opened up a vision—a vision of an Indian-owned news agency—and we prepared a scheme and submitted it to him. He felt pleased and wanted us to visit Madras and sound Mr K. Srinivasan of the *Hindu*. He had even telephoned Mr C. M. Kothari, a well-known stock broker, to keep him informed over the telephone of the trend of the talks we had with Mr Srinivasan. But Mr Srinivasan would not say anything without consulting Mr C. R. Srinivasan. There was an abundant degree of caution visible in their conversation. We therefore reported the lack of response to Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas.

Twelve years later, in the summer of 1948, an agreement was reached between the Press Trust of India and Reuters over the ownership and control of the Associated Press. I congratulated both of them on the successful completion of their efforts :

"My dear Srinivasan,

I write this to congratulate you and C. R. Srinivasan on the successful completion of your efforts for the establishment

of a national news agency in India and for control over the operations of Reuters News Service between Cairo and Singapore. You can appreciate more than others the feeling of joy and satisfaction over this happy consummation by one who had something to do with both Reuters and the Associated Press of India for 20 years at the headquarters of the Government of India and watched the progress of the recent negotiations right from the start.

Though the opportunity for a development such as the one now achieved arose in 1937, no progress was found possible and the war years intervened to put off all our efforts. But with the achievement of India's freedom, a more propitious atmosphere emerged and as the leader of the profession and chairman of the delegation to London, you had the opportunity to guide the negotiations. Those interested in our cause watched the progress of the negotiations with some anxiety because you had to contend against prejudices and misunderstandings. Ably assisted by C. R. Srinivasan you directed the negotiations with a sense of realism and faith in the principles of a free Press in a free India.

Anxiety prevailed even until a few days ago when the London deal was subjected to hostile criticism during the discussions in Bombay. By your wonderful patience and stern refusal to be dragged into any controversy, you allowed truth to triumph and secured for the deal the unanimous support of the profession. Not only have you earned the gratitude of the Press but the thanks of the people as reflected in the statements made by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister of India welcoming the Agreement."

## 8. THE STORY OF OUR SEVERANCE

To revert to 1937. Our struggle with the Associated Press and Reuters ended in our quitting the Agency and the

Company announcing it on the first of February. It was an epic struggle in which while the newspapers sympathized with me and my colleague, they were powerless to alter the position, particularly as the character of the Government was then largely British. But our old clientele, the Indian newspapers, rushed to our aid. Before formally quitting the Agency, we wrote on the 24th January 1937 to Sir Roderick Jones as follows :

Dear Sir Roderick Jones,

Our connection with the Associated Press terminates on 31st January 1937. We requested extension of time limit till the 15th February as that would have enabled us to address you on the subject, but as this was not agreed to, we had no alternative but to give our reply without the chance of putting our case before you. We take this opportunity, while still in your service, to write and thank you for the confidence you had bestowed on us and for the personal interest you had taken in us all these eighteen years. We also wish to submit the reasons which have led us to take the grave step of severing our connection with the Company with which we were so completely identified and in the progress of which we were privileged to play a not inconsiderable part.

We believe the correspondence which has passed between us and the General Manager has already been seen by you. We however enclose a copy for perusal, if necessary.

The questions that arose were :

1. That the Company is not prepared to renew our services on the basis of a contract but would re-engage us on the basis of a 3 months' notice on either side—We told Mr Moloney that it was he himself, who, in 1932 insisted that we should have it, remarking that after the death of Mr K. C. Roy he wished to be sure that the Company could continue to have our services. We needed no notice period to be specified and, confident as we were of our utility to the organization, we were prepared to give up the employment without notice,

whenever the Company felt our services were not needed.

2. That we should be prepared to accept a salary of Rs. 1,000/-—We told Moloney that this question was, comparatively, of minor importance to those who acted as an integral part of the organization and who were prepared to progress with the Company's own progress. If the Company's financial position required any sacrifice even greater than the one proposed, we were ready to accept it. We, therefore, never even once referred to the question of salary or asked for a contract or for a notice period.

3. That we should be prepared to serve at any of the offices of the Company—We had several discussions with Mr Moloney on this point. We stated that five years ago, when the contract was drawn up, Mr Moloney wished to retain a similar liberty of action for the Company, but on our representation he agreed to insert the clause that ordinarily Simla-Delhi would remain our headquarters. Never during the last five years, nor, for the matter of that, during the past 18 years, had any occasion arisen when we declined to undertake any special work outside our headquarters. We reminded him that we had covered 18 annual sessions of the Indian National Congress, several sessions of the All-India Muslim League, the All-India Liberal Federation, of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and of the Associated Chambers of Commerce ; that we had gone on long tours to cover the proceedings of the Leo Commission, the Tariff Board, the Simon Commission, the Frontier Enquiry Committee; and, further we had opened a number of provincial and mofussil offices and negotiated with provincial Governments and Indian States for supply of our news services to them. On the question of out-of-station duties our complaint had been that our services were not being adequately indented on and we repeatedly suggested to Mr Moloney to depute us oftener during the slack season to develop the various centres of the organisation. But Simla-Delhi has remained, and, in

our considered opinion, will remain at least for a considerable number of years the main centre of news in India. We could not agree with Mr Moloney's view that after April 1937 the centre of gravity would change to the provinces. However, as Mr Moloney held to his own view, we offered that for five months every year he could post us both wherever he liked, but that Simla-Delhi should remain our headquarters in the interests of the efficiency of the Agency. We pointed out that the Free Press and the United Press had hitherto failed to cause a serious breach in the A. P. position, mainly because they could not storm Simla-Delhi, nor get ahead of us, whenever either one or both of us, handled the news services of the Agency. We further felt that having developed Simla-Delhi, and, possessing very valuable contacts, it was not advisable that we should delink ourselves from that centre and leave the field open for attack by the Opposition. As responsible officers of the Company, we could not feel satisfied that all was well if the Agency took the decision that we were not needed in Simla-Delhi. The increasing tendency of publicity organizations, both official and private, made it all the more necessary that at the headquarters here, there should be experienced officers who realized the reaction of any publicity move so as to ensure that the independence and impartiality of the Agency was not open to suspicion. Our experience of the last two years has only made us feel that the need for such a precaution is greater today than it ever was.

4. That the appointment of Mr J. Turner as Deputy General Manager has upset the balance of the organization in respect of its personnel—Hitherto it had been the practice to entrust the work of General Manager to a British official of the Company and to entrust the Managing Editorship of Simla-Delhi to an Indian. In recent years, however, the position of the Managing Editor had been considerably weakened by the transfer, slowly and progressively, of all control over news service from Delhi to Bombay, but we were all

along led to believe that our advice would still be sought and listened to in respect of centres other than Simla-Delhi. Only last year, Mr Moloney, while communicating your decision that we should both terminate our special service to the newspapers, mentioned that we should regard Simla-Delhi as the news headquarters for India and keep control over the various stations. That this conception of the situation ended with a mere statement is another matter. However, we felt that so long as the chief news centre of India was in our charge it was not necessary to disturb Mr Moloney's scheme of centralized control from Bombay. Now, the appointment of Mr Turner as a Deputy General Manager has led to his automatic assumption of control of Simla-Delhi. The fact that he issued Editorial Orders immediately after his arrival here without even consulting us was, at any rate, in keeping with the implications of the new appointment. Even if it be argued, as Mr Moloney did in his personal discussions with us, that Mr Turner might not remain in Delhi beyond the present season, the fact remains that an additional post has been created upsetting the balance between British and Indian co-operation, and what was done for a season might be continued for any length of time. You will notice that in his written reply to our enquiry Mr Moloney would not even admit that Mr Turner had been sent on special duty to Delhi. Our feeling was that Mr Turner, even assuming that he has acquired some knowledge of editorial work in Bombay, could not be placed in supreme authority in Simla-Delhi and that his status and standing in the news sphere of the Company could not be considered higher than that of the officers in Simla-Delhi unless, of course, he acted or was appointed as General Manager. We told Mr Moloney that we always welcomed him in Simla-Delhi and had always been urging him to pay more frequent visits to this centre. We also added that we personally had no objection to any officer of the Company becoming a General

Manager so long as the relative balance in the position of the officers of the Company was not upset.

As, however, we were anxious to arrive at some solution for the smooth working of the Agency, we suggested to Mr Moloney that he might meet the situation by constituting an Advisory Board consisting of Mr Sen, Mr Turner and the two of us and entrust it with the duty of advising on all matters concerning the control of news services, this Board's recommendations to be accepted or rejected by the General Manager in his sole discretion. When Mr Moloney failed to accept this suggestion, we offered another alternative, that he might divide India into four territorial units and entrust each of us with one such unit under his direct supervision and control. Either of these two alternatives, if accepted, would have conduced to a more efficient working of the organization and helped to tide over the difficulty created by Mr Turner's elevation to the newly created post. Mr Moloney was not prepared to consider any of these alternatives. On the other hand, he maintained that Mr Turner's position was superior to all three of us and that he was most likely to succeed him as General Manager. We replied that we had no objection to Mr Turner succeeding him as General Manager ; all that we wanted to say was that an additional post need not be created, sandwiching another official between the General Manager and the Managing Editor, as such an appointment would connote a lack of confidence in the chief Indian officers of the Company and adversely affect their status and influence.

We hope we have made the position clear, that our objections were of a fundamental character, and that Mr Moloney's attitude indicated to us a definite change in the role entrusted to us, and that as Mr Moloney was not prepared to accept any of our suggestions we could not take the responsibility for the affairs of the Agency and pull our full weight and help in piloting it through the difficult times ahead. Our regret is that we were deprived of the opportunity of

stating our case earlier to you. Even though the issue is now beyond repair, we trust you will not mind the liberty we have taken of putting you in possession of the facts as we see them and the reasons which prompted our action. Our regret is all the keener because once again a crisis has occurred in the affairs of the Agency, but we feel sure that in the decision we have taken we have the confidence of the public which we have served through the Agency for so long and with such loyalty."

Soon after terminating our connexion with the Associated Press and Reuters, we plunged into our special correspondents' work for our old group of Indian papers with renewed zeal and ardour. While the Government of India had concentrated on making us leave Delhi we established ourselves within a few weeks and as proof of this fact we both built houses for ourselves in New Delhi. Realizing the value of our news contacts, Anglo-Indian newspapers also asked for our special service which we supplied. They included the *Statesman*, Delhi and Calcutta, and the *Times of India*, Bombay.

A few months later, Mr Arthur Moore approached us with the offer to employ one of us as special correspondent at Lucknow. Durga Das accepted it and went away. I remained glued to Delhi and incidentally, it gave me the long-awaited opportunity of putting some life into *Roy's Weekly*, a journal founded in 1933 by Durga Das, Usha Nath Sen and me in memory of K.C. Roy who had died two years before. The front page of this journal used to have as its principal feature "A Wayfarer's Diary". Political events in the country, especially in Delhi, provided enough material for a weekly article on the Whys and Wherefores of the politics of those days.

The circulation figure of this journal was not very high. But its influence as an educator of public opinion was great. This was because of the special blending of news and views. Lord Linlithgow was its regular reader; on two or three



occasions when I had interviews with him, he had this journal in front of him. The mission of Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942 with his "Take it or Leave it" attitude provided enough stories which *Roy's Weekly* alone carried among the newspapers, so much so that several newspaper editors looked forward to the journal for their guidance on the Cripps Mission and its aftermath. For four or five years after, this journal commanded an almost premier position among the weeklies of India. I know that the India Office once gave instruction to the Government of India to airmail an issue every week as soon as it could be had. One member of the Viceroy's Executive Council told me that he had informed higher authorities that for a correct and comprehensive appreciation of the political currents of the week, they must look to the Wayfarer's Diary in *Roy's Weekly*. I may also mention that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel from his detention in Ahmednagar Fort sent word to me through the Associated Press to post him a copy of *Roy's Weekly*. Similarly, Mr Satyamurthi during his detention in Amraoti Jail complained if his copy happened to go astray. To politicians, whether in detention or free, to editors and to newsmen, *Roy's Weekly* was a rich source of political news. And somehow many officials and several newspapermen came to know who the author was. I remember the occasions on which two or three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council specifically requested me for their names to be mentioned so that their role would come in for notice by the Viceroy. My connexion with this paper ceased on the night of the 15th February 1946 as the next morning I joined the Government of India as Principal Information Officer.

## 9. PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Agreement reached in London between the Press

Trust of India and Reuters was sealed in India as a result of the Reuter Goodwill Mission that came in March 1949, under the leadership of Lord Layton. During the 20 days of their stay, the Mission was entertained by the Press, the public and the Government, and they have left behind an abundance of goodwill and faith in the freedom of the news charter that now binds the Press in India with the World News Organization. It was a very happy coincidence that at the time the Reuter Goodwill Mission was in Madras, there was present also the delegation from the Egyptian Press. I heard the leader of the delegation addressing the South Indian Journalists' Federation, when he said: "We who are responsible members of the Press in Egypt who collaborate in the field, will never deviate from our main duty of fostering good relationship between all countries and to be loyal to truth before anything else. The more we collaborate towards that aim, the more are we worthy of our great profession, namely, journalism." The same feeling was reflected by Lord Layton in replying to the speech of Mr Bhaktavatsalam, Minister for Information with the Madras Government, when he spoke of "the transfer of political power to the Press Trust of India by Reuters", and alluded to the "very extremely harmonious meeting held between the Directors of Reuters and the Board of the Press Trust of India as a happy augury for the journey they were undertaking in the international ship of Reuters." The General Manager as well as the Editor, Mr Chancellor and Mr Cole of Reuters affirmed their eagerness to make the 2000 odd members of their staff all over the world "conscious of the loyalty and service required of them by the great newspaper industry in India in association with the newspaper industries of England and Australia". Similar sentiments were expressed by the Mission during their stay in New Delhi, at the conclusion of which the *Hindustan Times* observed editorially: "The Agreement gives the enterprise real global significance and invests it with the greatest im-

portance and prestige. There can be no doubt that it opens up possibilities of immense service which a right-minded press can render to humanity and to the cause of peace through the potent instrument of the widest and quickest possible dissemination of objective news."

The Press in India, with the solitary exception of the *Free Press Journal*, has extended its co-operation to the new undertaking.

## 10. MY FOREIGN TOUR

As a working journalist, besides being editor of the Associated Press of India, I have travelled all over the country, literally from the borders of Afghanistan in the North to Cape Comorin in the South ; from Karachi in the West to the Burma border in the East. These travels during the last thirty years and more, done mostly by train and more recently by air, have given me an insight into the ways and manners of the people of different provinces, their economic and social standards, and also, if I may say so, their spiritual and moral values. A notion of one's own country is liable to be exaggerated unless there is personal knowledge of other countries by visits to and studies of their peoples. Such an opportunity I availed myself of in 1932 and the fact that I belonged to a world news organization helped me in gathering adequate and relevant knowledge.

I am not recording all that any traveller would see in the course of his travels. I write with the memories of a journalist. The fact that I was a journalist helped me even in the boat to be a much sought after person. Within four days of leaving the shores of Bombay, as we were passing through the Red Sea in the month of May, news was received by wireless that communal rioting of a serious nature had broken out in

Bombay at Bhendibazar resulting in hundreds of casualties. Opposite my cabin was the wireless telegraph office where the operator, being an Italian, found difficulty in deciphering the names of places. He approached me on receipt of the first message and I helped him before the bulletin was put on the boards. All subsequent messages had to be edited by me before they were circulated among passengers. Naturally the passengers, some of whom included businessmen and lawyers from Bombay, were anxious to know the cause and developments of the rioting. The messages received by wireless in the boat were very scrappy and I, therefore, visited Reuters office at Cairo and obtained all particulars before rejoining my fellow passengers in the boat at Port Said. They were thankful to me for the information which meant considerable relief to several of them.

I remained for four days at Naples visiting the beauty spots round about Mount Vesuvius and then went to Rome. My itinerary had been planned by Sir. T. Vijayaraghavacharya, and many friends in the boat including two or three Indian M. P.s expressed their desire to accompany me, particularly as they found that in my company they had better opportunities for seeing things and contacting people. At Rome an interview had been fixed for me with Signor Mussolini. But his brother's death led to the cancellation of the engagement. Later, however, I saw him at close range in an Air Force display held during the anniversary celebrations of Italy's entry into the First World War. There I met Dr Scarpa who had been a representative of the Italian Government in Simla. We were both very keen to talk to each other. An engagement was fixed, and I met him at the Foreign Office. In many ways it was a useful meeting. In the course of our conversation I referred to the complaint I had heard from one or two foreign Press correspondents functioning at the Italian capital. The complaint was that no foreigner

could have any business or controlling interest in any Italian newspaper ; and further, foreign Press correspondents were treated very differently from Italian journalists. The explanation offered by Dr Scarpa was revealing. He said : "Mr Iyengar, in this respect we are in the same position as you are in India. You know that in India foreigners come and either purchase newspapers or start newspapers and with the help of your custom, prosper. They do not stop at that but ridicule you and bring you down in your own esteem by making out that you are unfit to govern yourselves. They so present your position that you begin to feel diffident about yourselves, making you believe that you are a progressively deteriorating race. This was what the foreign journalists tried to do in Italy. Mussolini, when he came to power, located this trouble and rooted it out by ordering that no foreigner should have any interest in an Italian newspaper. What is wrong with this? I can tell you that since that order was enforced, we Italians have come to be recognized better in Britain and other countries ; and Italy which used to be spoken of as a third-rate nation is now being considered as among the greatest. There is no other meaning to be attached to what are called restrictions on the foreign Press in Italy. As for Press Conferences, they are being separately held for foreign correspondents in order to provide information to them from the respective angles. They do not suffer for want of correct information."

## 11. TALK WITH SGR. GAYDA

Dr Scarpa was anxious that I should meet Sgr. Gayda, Editor of *Giornale d'Italia*, Mussolini's Lord Haw-Haw. When I met him in his office where everything was spick and span, he was full of spirits but equally filled with prejudices. He had a complaint against Mahatma Gandhi in connexion

with a talk he had with him when the latter was returning home from the Round Table Conference. Gayda said to me: "Mr Iyengar, you are a working journalist. Suppose you go with a notebook in hand and have a talk with a leader and take down points in the course of conversation. Would you not regard that as material for the Press obtained at an interview?" I answered: "If that was all that happened between you and Mahatma Gandhi, then I say it was not an interview. You put a few stray questions and the answers given were merely elucidatory. But if the subject matter of the conversation was more exclusive and concerning relations between different countries, it was only fair that the purport of that conversation should have been shown to the Mahatma before publication. The practice in India is that Mahatma Gandhi is not quoted as having given an 'interview' unless it was arranged in advance." Sgr. Gayda was not satisfied with my exposition and grumbled. He seemed to regard the liberty of the Press rather lightly and irresponsibly.

A visit to the Vatican in order to have an audience with the Pope was somewhat of an ordeal even though it had been arranged by the British Consul at Rome. I had to walk through more than 50 vast halls covering a tremendous area before I could reach the biggest room where His Holiness Pope Pius XI was standing. When my turn came for the audience and I kneeled and kissed the ring he looked at my turban, tied up in the South Indian fashion, and said "shyom" which I came to know as meaning good and shining. My turban seemed to have been so attractive that His Holiness ordered a special photograph to be taken by the Vatican photographer. If I were to give a detailed account of all that I saw at the Vatican it would fill volumes, for among other things one of the best Museums in the world is to be found there. I am not referring to the collection of mummies or the earthen-pots or other reminders of Italy's ancient civilization,

but to the religious section with Bibles containing golden leaves, each copy displayed with covers studded with diamonds, emeralds and other precious stones. Not only at the Vatican but also in St. Peter's and other churches, and indeed throughout Italy one can find the rich blending of Art with Religion, each enriching and exalting the other. No wonder the Germans, when they attacked the sacred city in the Second World War, took care not to touch the Vatican.

Italy is famous for the best painters in the world and Florence is the home of Italian painting. To study the paintings in the famous Uffizi and Pitti picture galleries one requires several days, for there are so many things to be seen, each excelling the other. I could not spend more than three days but what I saw filled me with hope, as such rich and imperishable art could only enhance human values, leaving for successive generations the best and the noblest of heritages.

Three days in Venice, and I reached Vienna, the capital of Austria, and the pride of the world's medical profession. A clean city, with good and warm-hearted people, not yet recovered from the ill effects of the First World War, anxious for good trade-relationship with India and the East, and more than all interested in the progress of the Gandhian Movement. At Vienna there was a social gathering arranged in honour of the Indian visitors by the Hindusthan Association, and a report of what I said appeared in the local papers. The result was that from Graz, a University Centre, came the Secretary of the Foreign Knowledge Society of the University, with a request from the Rector that I might visit and address them. I hesitated, but the Secretary of the Hindusthan Association in Vienna persuaded me, pointing out that a visit by me would be helpful towards creating an understanding with the people of Austria, and in particular, would be helpful to the numerous Indian students at the various Universities in Austria. Accordingly, I proceeded to Graz and fulfilled the engagement.

Needless to say, the questions put related to trade prospects with India, progress of the Gandhian Movement, progress of Prohibition in India, etc.

I was in my usual dress, with turban on ; and wherever I went, whether in Austria or elsewhere on the Continent, I was hailed not so much as an Indian as Gandhi's Countryman. Such indeed was the magnetic spell of Gandhiji and his teachings even as early as 1932.

## 12. A GLIMPSE OF HITLER IN A CAFE

From Vienna I went to Berlin. Hitler had not come to power in 1932 but was being increasingly recognized as the power to be. This fact I noticed even while I was sipping my coffee in a cafe in Unter-den-Linden. A group of four persons briskly entered, swept in like a hurricane and sat prominently in the hall. "Hitler—Hitler" went round the whisper and I recognized the presence of a personality of tremendous determination. During my stay in Berlin I heard talks everywhere against the heavy reparations imposed by the Allies after the treaty of Versailles. And here was one personality who took advantage of circumstances, strutting about with his lieutenants and organizing his forces in order to wage a war against the Allied Powers.

Among the institutions in Berlin, later closed down under the orders of Hitler in his Jew-baiting campaign, were several dance houses to one of which I was taken by Bodker, the Berlin correspondent of Reuters. The speciality of this place called Femina was that while dancing was in progress the whole evening according to a time table, the visitors could take their seats at any table. Each table had a telephone with its number showing against electric light. No man or woman could be denied the request for a dance in this



hall. That was the rule. If one saw a particular person of the opposite sex at any table and wanted to dance with her or him, one had only to ring up the number from one's own table and immediately they must meet at the centre of the hall and dance. This freedom of choice of a partner bespoke of a communal friendliness in this highly industrialized city.

Another experience which Bodker arranged for me was flight in a Zeppelin—the first of the kind I had. It flew from Copenik lake and was called *Do ex de Haviland*—the biggest airship next to the *Graf Zeppelin*. The captain of the plane, Capt. Frederick Christianson, took special interest in me and bade me be seated next to him. Flying up to a height above which under the law he could not go, he asked me whether I was able to stand the height. I said: "Yes, quite all right. What should be wrong with me?" He informed me: "I have gone up the highest that I could and at this height people generally complain of heart trouble. You don't seem to. By the way, are you a vegetarian?" "Yes, I am a strict vegetarian." And he remarked: "Ah, that is the secret." I was for over an hour in the plane and did not feel sick. Some of the passengers who were also on the same pleasure trip, however, did complain. It was a wonderful air trip. I flew over the whole of Berlin and the adjacent areas. The town planning was superb, so expressive of German thoroughness.

### 13. SPEAKING IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT

From Berlin I made a dash to Britain via Hook Van Holland, catching glimpses of the fine pasture lands of Holland dotted with lovely dairy farms and splendid grazing cattle. With accommodation already arranged at Kensington Palace Mansion Hotel in Devere Gardens in London, I had no

difficulty in driving straight to my residence. Here a pleasant surprise was awaiting me. A letter from Sir Howard D'Egville, Secretary of the Empire Parliamentary Association, was given me, intimating that if I desired to go round and see the Parliament House I could do so at 10.30 a.m. that day. I had met Sir Howard D'Egville in Delhi a few months earlier when he had come to study the working of the Indian branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association. Sir Howard to whom I had written from Berlin to ensure for me a visit to the Parliament House had done so within two hours of my arrival. Though Sir Howard was himself present to receive us at Parliament House, we were placed in charge of a tall well-built person, a member of Parliament from Aberdeen, Mr Henry Chapman, whom I mistook for the first half hour for a Thomas Cook guide! Passing through Westminster Hall where was held the impeachment of Warren Hastings, we walked into the ante-room, the spot at which Guy Fawkes had planned his Gun Powder Plot, and then through a long corridor on both sides of which stand the statues of Prime Ministers of England, until at last you reach the circular hall where the public meet and converse. The huge doors were thrown open and the mother of Parliaments was on view. I had drawn from and drunk deep into the literature of the British Parliament. It has set a model for all the Dominion and sister Parliaments. There is no procedure or rule in the Indian Parliament which is not fashioned or modelled on the practice of the House of Commons. As an architectural achievement the House of Commons did not impress me. The seating arrangements appeared rather archaic—just tiers upon tiers with not many gangways either. No wonder half the number of M. P.'s are to be seen more often in the lobbies than in the Chamber. My first impression was none too cheerful and I did not hesitate to convey this to my friends walking with me. I kept pestering our guide with questions which seemed for the moment to tax him a little. Once inside the

Chamber, we got a full view of the lobbies as well as the smoking rooms, the committee rooms, etc.

While we were being shown the Speaker's Chair I happened to be standing in front of the Prime Minister's seat. Here I noticed a wooden box with the lid not locked, and so I played with it for a few seconds. Inside the box was the printed formula which members use at the time of the oath-taking ceremony. Our guide noticed me and thought of pulling my leg. Taking the Speaker's Chair, he said: "Gentlemen, our friend there has committed an offence under the Parliament Act and in virtue of section (so and so) I call upon him to suffer the due punishment by making a speech on behalf of the 380 millions of India." It was a titillating joke. Not to speak when called upon in the House of Commons itself and when your party consisted of not only Indian Legislators but also several Members from the Parliaments of Canada, Australia and South Africa, would have meant a minor failure for India. Here was an opportunity given to me to speak, the guide mistaking me to be a legislator from India! And immediately I summoned to my aid the little thoughts that I had collected earlier in the morning during the train journey from Harwich. Someone had left the morning paper in his seat with the headline "INDIA DEBATE IN COMMONS". This had attracted my attention and I had glanced through the summary at the top. It was a debate held the previous night at which Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, had announced the proposal to disband the Consultative Committee of the Indian Round Table Conference in order to expedite the working of the Conference itself at the Committee stage. Other thoughts also had flitted through my mind, such as the struggle in Ireland, the refusal of the Irish M. P.'s to take the oath of allegiance to the King, etc. etc. My friends, with some of whom I had been travelling in Europe, expected me to rise to the occasion. So I responded to the call of our guide, now seated firmly in the Speaker's Chair.

I started: "Mr Speaker, little did I imagine when I was playing with this box that it would prove to be a Pandora's box, for indeed it has given me this trouble of having to make a speech, a speech, as you say, on behalf of the 380 millions of India. That such an honour should have been given to me is itself a source of pride to me and in my effort to voice the 380 millions of Indians I bespeak your indulgence for just a few minutes, for I have not been in London even for two hours. But for the courtesy of Sir Howard D'Egville, the Secretary of the Empire Parliamentary Association, to whom I had written from Berlin, I would not have been a member of this party today. But I value the privilege because although I am not a Parliamentarian, my life has been spent in the Parliament Houses of my own country. Frankly, I must confess that this building with the seating arrangements as I see them does not impress me, for in Delhi we have better arrangements and better lighted rooms. But that is only a minor part of my complaint. For I know that it is from this House that many a Parliamentary tradition is handed down to the Parliaments elsewhere, and one of them is the taking of the oath of allegiance to the King. So what has been my offence in just opening this box and looking at the formula that is printed on this card? This is a formula which is uttered by every legislator at the time of the oath-taking in our own Parliaments. There has been no complaint on that score till today, not even by the full-blooded Swarajist who is out to destroy India's link with Britain. But close to this island are your own kith and kin some of whom have strongly objected to taking this oath. Whether they are right or not, I am not here to adjudge, but I do think that when you are not able to secure the willing allegiance of your own kith and kin near about you, the infection might one day catch the legislators in a far off country, particularly when that country is held in subjection and whose voice counts for so little in the shaping of its own Constitution. That

reminds me of what I read in this morning's paper of a debate held in this very Chamber only last night. According to that report, our genial Secretary of State announced the proposal of the British Government to do away with the Consultative Committee of the Round Table Conference in order to push on with the drafting of the constitution for India at the next stage of the Round Table Conference. I do not know if it is a wise move, but I have a feeling, coming as I do from Delhi where the Committee was first set up, and whose proceedings I have watched very closely, that this decision is bound to evoke the strongest complaints from political India and might add one more to the forces of non-co-operation in my country. India cannot be governed by another nation, however well-meaning and altruistic, and there can be no contentment or peace in that country unless the people govern themselves in all their affairs."

I spoke more or less in this strain and as I was speaking I noticed visible signs of appreciation from my Indian friends, some of whom were members of the Indian Legislature. There were besides Sir Vasudeva, Raja of Kollengode, Sir Abdulla Haroon who was proceeding to Ottawa and his son Mr Yusuf Haroon (now the Premier of Sind in Pakistan). After me came three more speeches, one each from the M. P.'s of Canada, Australia and South Africa. But by common consent mine was acclaimed to be the best speech. Now our pseudo-Speaker (Sir Henry Chapman) came down from the Chair and congratulated me on my performance. It was then that he discovered that I was a mere journalist and not a legislator. He and I became friends and whenever I wanted to visit the House of Commons during my stay in England I had only to give him a ring and I was able to get the ticket of admission to the Dominion Gallery.

On two occasions there were debates in the House of Commons on Irish matters and once about India. On all

these three occasions when I was seated in the Dominions gallery the one person who attracted my sympathy was Mr Dulanty, the High Commissioner for Ireland in London. One day in the course of the debate when Mr James Thomas, better known as Jimmy Thomas, was speaking against the Irish Government, I smiled, and noticing this, he enquired: "Why are you smiling?" And when I replied, "Well, this is the old and usual argument about India as well," he remarked, "I am not surprised." The debate was on the Irish Import Duty Bill in which James Thomas was speaking for Government and Mr Lansbury for the Opposition. Dulanty promised to write to Mr De Valera about me in case I wanted to visit Ireland. Having gone to Ireland from Scotland I did not avail of the offer made by him. It was the editor of the *Irish Press* who arranged my interview with the Irish Premier.

#### 14. WITH SIR SAMUEL HOARE

Three days after my arrival in London, I went to the India Office at Whitehall. The first thing I ever noticed was of course the statue of Lord Clive, founder of the Indian Empire. I found Sir James Dunnett in the verandah. He took me to his room. He was to act as Reforms Commissioner in Delhi, but was now on special duty in the India Office for the preparation of the Reforms Bill. He was particularly anxious that I should meet Sir Samuel Hoare. When I mentioned that I had a letter of introduction from Lord Willingdon to the Secretary of State, he was very happy. Mr Croft, the Private Secretary, passed on the letter to his Chief. Sir Samuel invited me to lunch at Cadogan Gardens the next day. Here is the gist of our conversation :

*Hoare* : I was very glad to receive Lord Willingdon's letter about you. He says you are a very good

Press friend of his. Now I want you to be my friend also. By the way, are you any relation of A. Rangaswami Iyengar who came here last year at the time of the Round Table Conference ?

*Self* : We belong to the same clan.

*Hoare* : The *Hindu* is a marvellous paper, isn't it ?

*Self* : Yes, it is a very influential paper.

*Hoare* : How is it that even the *Hindu* has criticized me for the speech that I delivered in the House of Commons on the 29th June ?

*Self* : Well, you cannot expect the *Hindu* to take any other line. I noticed the Press comments on your speech of the 29th June.

*Hoare* : What do you think of my speech ?

*Self* : A few hours after reading a press summary of your speech I addressed a group of Legislators and Dominion Parliamentarians in your House of Commons.

*Hoare* : And what did you say ?

*Self* : I said it was not a wise move and would only give further impetus to the non-co-operation movement in India.

*Hoare* : Your people read far too much in our words. If you want to get on with the drafting of a constitution it is better to have less talk and more work. Now this idea of a Consultative Committee was good up to a certain point ; I do not want to keep it going like a merry-go-round all the time. We have already understood your problems through such consultations. Don't you think it is better that we did away with further consultations when they may act as a dead-weight upon the very task of constitution-drafting? While I intend business you people would indulge in consultations and conferences.

*Self* : Yes, but there are ways of doing it. Surely your

speech was not without words which could easily be misunderstood. If you had approached the Consultative Committee and got their prior support to your plan, and if the intention was to get on speedily with the task of constitution-drafting, the situation might have been different. But you merely unilaterally make up your mind and announce a decision which is contrary to the very idea of consultation that was to prevail through all stages of the Round Table Conference, and therefore, contrary to the assurance given by Ramsay Macdonald when he was Prime Minister.

*Hoare :* I find that Sir Tej, Mr Jayakar and others have resigned from the Round Table Conference in protest against my speech. So it seems I have to explain myself at some length. I have just fifteen minutes at my disposal as I must be in Parliament at 3. So I will tell you what I had in my mind ; would you please help in drafting a message for India ? If you could manage to send it through your Reuters Agency I should be glad.

Having heard Sir Samuel Hoare, I went across to the India Office where Hugh Macgregor, the Information Officer, provided facilities. I asked Macgregor to send my message to Reuters office. I also telephoned Reuters that a message of interest to India drafted after my talk with the Secretary of State would be coming and that it could be used as our own. The next day I received a handsome letter from Macgregor thanking me for the message. Reuters office in London was pleased that I had established such excellent personal contact with the Secretary of State. Furthermore, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr Jayakar and others who had resigned from the Conference withdrew their resignations and peace once again reigned in Whitehall and in the minds of the co-operating politicians in India.



Sir Samuel Hoare gave a tea party at the India Office that week at which I was introduced by him to Mr Lloyd George and Mr Lansbury. The latter invited me to tea the following week, which gave me the opportunity of meeting the leader of the British Labour Party and of acquainting myself with his attitude to India.

## 15. REUTERS NEWS EDITOR MOLLIFIED

Early during my stay in London, the Chief Editor of Reuters, Rickatson-Hatt, rang me up to see me urgently at the office. When I went there I found him in a terrific fury. He flourished a news cable that had been received from Simla containing the three words "Shyok Dam Burst". "On receipt of this cable," he complained, "we sent a service to Simla for details but no reply has been received. The newspapers here are clamouring for the news of the effects of the dam-burst. Why is your Simla office so sluggish and unable to respond in an emergency?" I replied: "I am afraid you cannot get any further news about this for a long time to come—perhaps for a number of days." Rickatson-Hatt said impatiently: "Why shouldn't your office get this news telephonically?" I smiled and said: "Shyok is not like Manchester or Birmingham where you have only to dial a number to obtain news. Shyok is several miles up from Srinagar in the Himalayas. The bursting of the dam is a periodical phenomenon and when it takes place the people down the river Indus move away from their dwellings on the riverside until the water subsides." "Look, it is getting late. If you say that Simla cannot give any further news for our afternoon editions, then all I can say is it is a hopeless arrangement." I sensed that all he wanted was how the catastrophe was met with, and I told him that I was prepared to give him a story for the afternoon editions of newspapers in London. Three years earlier

a similar burst had occurred and I had myself sent a long cable from Simla—which I might now take from the Index clerk in Reuters office and prepare the copy. Rickatson-Hatt calmed down a bit and said: "I don't care what you do. Reuters must retrieve its reputation." "Let me see the Index clerk," I assured him, "and I shall give you the copy for the afternoon editions." The Index clerk brought in my three year old message, and a suitable copy was supplied promptly, with the result that the *Evening Standard* carried it with a photograph of the hills. The editorial log of that day made a prominent mention of this "news feat" of mine. The fact of the matter was that at Shyok several miles up the hills there are guards stationed to keep perpetual watch on the glacier and whenever there is a burst during the summer it is reported by the waving of torch lights at night and the watchmen down below the stream in like manner pass on the news until the Tahsildar in the submontane area sends a report to the revenue authorities in Srinagar who in turn submit it to the Dewan with a copy to the British Resident. The British Resident includes it in his weekly news report to the Government of India at Simla where the External Affairs Secretary (Sir Aubrey Metcalfe for a number of years) holds his Press Conference on Thursdays and makes a bare mention of the report to the correspondents. Accordingly, Reuters picked up this line and sent it to London as a matter of routine. When I explained the process to Rickatson-Hatt at the lunch I had with him the day after my news copy had appeared, he realized that in the collection of such news items in India a different technique had to be adopted. Anyway I modestly claim that my memory saved Reuters and their reputation. Though this was, in a manner of speaking, a busman's holiday for me, my journalistic interest for scenting news was foremost. I travelled quite a bit in Britain before I visited Ireland. Needless to say that my admiration for the British character increased.

On that subject one could write volumes, but that is not my present purpose. I was interested as much with the manner in which Britain adjusted her economics as well as her politics to the changing needs of the times. I discovered an adaptability, a resourcefulness, a capacity for friendship in the British, covered withal by a national reticence.

## 16. MAHATMA DISTORTED AT TUSSAUDS

The British Museum and its various exhibits vividly brought home to me a cross-section of the life and civilization of several countries which constituted the Commonwealth. The Indian section struck me as perfect in almost every particular. I had spent ten years at Conjeevaram—the town of pagodas in South India. Now at the British Museum I was face to face with the Chariot procession of Sri Varadarajaswami Temple. In point of art and presentation the model was a faithful reproduction. Customs and manners, religious worship and social practices were depicted as faithfully, and each exhibit was so clear that no guide was necessary. In this respect the British Museum was the best I saw, far out-vieing even the museums of Berlin or Rome. The effect of the perfection of Tussauds Models was however badly marred by a deliberate distortion of Mahatma Gandhi's figure.

During my stay at Manchester I had occasion to visit the Rubber Factory at Redferns Hill. The Manager's first question was "Do you know Mrs Besant?" My answer in the affirmative induced him to show me round. I visited every department except the one where the mixing of colours was done before preparing the various materials. That was a secret known only to a few men at the top. But the materials produced were linoleum, table covers, fleetfoot, high class shoes, etc., all out of crude rubber imported from Travancore,

Ceylon and other countries. When I visited Travancore, in the December of that year, I learnt that the people there did not even know where their rubber was being exported to. No attempt was being made to process the raw product. The people of Travancore go barefoot though they live among rubber plantations and produce rubber!

It was an example of that sad characteristic of British Imperialism where the raw product was exported to England and imported back into India as finished goods rather than develop the industry in the home of the product.

## 17. RETURN *VIA* PARIS AND GENEVA

During my return journey, I spent a week in Paris, where I met Mr Ralph Heinzen, Manager of the United Press of America office, as I had a letter of introduction to him from Mr T. B. Morgan of the same agency in Rome. This was on a day on which the Press Association of Paris of which Mr Heinzen was President held its weekly luncheon and business meeting. It was a sultry afternoon, so sultry that one journalist came wearing merely a banian. There were altogether eighty journalists present. They discussed, among other matters, how the Secretary of the Foreign Office threatened the correspondent of an American paper for having published something which was not accurate, and another correspondent bewailed at having been refused permission to see the Secretary of another department in order to seek clarification. Such complaints of journalists had a familiar ring in my ears. As usual, the President by tactful negotiations with the Foreign Office chiefs in Paris solved the difficulties of the correspondents.

. I was honoured by the Press Association as the chief guest and speaker. I explained the position of the Press in

India. Reuters held the monopoly in foreign news in India and the Associated Press owned by Reuters was sweeping the field with little or no opposition. When I said that no newspaper in India received news from any other source, the gathering was shocked. In Paris, as elsewhere on the Continent, no newspaper depended so entirely on one or two news agencies. They subscribed to news services of at least half a dozen, besides maintaining correspondents at all the capital centres. "What about the future?" they asked. I replied that the future of news services in India was largely dependent on the future of the Indian constitution. The person who appreciated my speech most was of course Mr Josselyn Hennessy, Reuter's Paris correspondent just posted there and who was enrolled as a member of the Association that very day. He later left Reuters and became *News Chronicle* correspondent at Paris and was appointed by the Government of India as the Principal Information Officer when the constitutional changes were inaugurated in 1937. He held this post till 1941 when he was switched over to Washington as Public Relations Officer. Recently he came back to India as the correspondent of the Kemsley Group of newspapers at the headquarters of the Government of India. After India attained Independence, I noticed, in my capacity as the Principal Information Officer of the Government of India, an increasing tendency on his part to be bitter about the national Government in India. Mr Hennessy has left journalism and was last reported to have entered business in Clive Street at Calcutta.

From Paris I visited Versailles with its hall of mirrors including the one where the Peace Treaty was signed after the First World War. At Geneva I spent adequate time in the invigorating atmosphere of its neighbourhood, at the Chamonix Hill on the top of which was the glacier called Mer-de-Glace—a river of ice that moves at the rate of one inch a year. I walked over the glacier and had hot coffee with Dr Katial,

in the tingling warmth of the crisp mountain air. I spent a whole day visiting the office of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office. It was an education for me. The atmosphere was completely international. India's contribution to these two organizations was but financial ; otherwise she had little or no place. There were over 300 Press correspondents prowling about the place but not one Indian, for news to India of both these organizations was supplied by Reuters through London and no Indian newspaper had thought it necessary to represent itself here. The result was that when India at all came up for discussion the coverage was done by a Britisher who knew how to distil the news from the British angle. Mr A. C. Chatterji, the Indian Information Officer of the International Labour Office who had been my colleague in India in the Associated Press, was good enough to take me round. I was particularly struck by the fact that at the League of Nations there were several apartments for the use of Press correspondents, each with a wireless telephone connecting such distant centres as Washington, Rio-de-Janeiro, Quebec, London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, Canberra, Tokyo, Chungking, but *not* Delhi. India was treated as a subject nation and a dependent country of Britain.

I took some pains to study Geneva in its historical background, its international foreground, for it was from there that conventions and covenants emanated for the benefit of the world. There was not a session of the Indian Central Assembly which did not pass some resolution or other either adopting them or expressing difficulty of application. One day, as I was walking over the bridge in front of the Rousseau Statue, I was accosted by two persons who turned out to be American journalists belonging to the Hearst Press, named Goblany and Kirley. They were looking for the office of the League of Nations. I took them a few yards off and pointed in the direction of the famous building situated more than a mile away. Both of them placed their hands on their hearts and

said: "Thank God, we can now tell our people that we have seen the League of Nations!"

Passing through Lausanne where the Disarmament Conference took place, I saw the Graf Zeppelin flying over the very spot where the famous international conference had been held on war reparations. Then I reached Milan. Two most interesting places to be seen here are the Cathedral and the Cemetery. At the Cathedral I had an experience which was the first of its kind. I was always proud of my turban and it took me to various places ; but at this Cathedral I was asked to remove it if I wanted to go in. I hesitated and said that I had visited St. Peter's Church in Rome and various other Cathedrals all over Europe, but never was I asked to remove it. But as the gentleman at the entrance was adamant and I did not know the language, I removed my turban. When he discovered that it was made up of a piece of cloth, he was profusely apologetic.

From Genoa we reached Naples and here Mr Walchand Hirachand was trying to discover the chemical action behind the erupting of Vesuvius. I suggested that this could be done by visiting a place called Solfatara—ten miles from the city. It is a long ridge of sulphur where you find several pits bubbling and boiling and the application of a mere lighted match would set the entire pit ablaze for some minutes. We spent two hours on this trip which was highly educative.

The journey to India up to Aden was uneventful. It was unbearably hot through the Red Sea. Walchand Hirachand and Sir Shadi Lal indulged in a little tom-foolery. Atiya Begum, picturesquely dressed, said to be one of the founders of what was called the Three Arts Circle in Bombay, approached Shadi Lal with a request to preside over a meeting to be held the next day. Walchand Hirachand (so I understood) suggested my name—of which I knew nothing till the next day a few minutes before the meeting. After lunch

that day I was talking to S. S. Bajpai, when Atiya Begum approached me and said: "The hall is fairly full and the people are waiting." I did not know what it was all about. Peeping into the hall, I found one of the largest gatherings and there was much clapping of hands as if to welcome me.

It was the most embarrassing moment of my life. Sir Shadi Lal, a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and Walchand Hirachand, the famous industrialist, were enjoying a quiet laugh at my expense. I thought the best way out was to say a few words and sit down. But the subject was the contribution of *Sangitha* to western music. When Atiya Begum explained that *Sangitha* meant music *including dance*, Walchand Hirachand suggested "Why not speak on dance?" The audience cheered. I sensed the temper and I joined in the fun. •

I spoke for 25 minutes on dance, beginning with the fact that Bharadwaja used to prescribe notes on dance for Rama and Sita. I referred to my visit to Mohenjo Daro in Sind and how among the exhibits I noticed a statuette in a dancing posture—which indicated that 5,000 years ago dance was a developed art in India. I am not recording all that I said, in my speech but when I concluded, not only Shadi Lal and Walchand but many others came up and congratulated me for what they described as a brilliant impromptu on a very technical subject.



## **PART IV**



## THE CRIPPS MISSION AND WHY IT FAILED

As a free-lancer I worked ceaselessly in the political fever of 1942—the year of Cripps' visit to India. I may say that what I published was read by political India with considerable interest. I had several 'scoops' to my credit on those occasions. Here are bits from contributions which, I may be permitted to say, official Delhi and London followed with some interest, and which were published in a number of newspapers throughout India :

### 1. BRITISH CABINET MINISTER TO VISIT INDIA

*March 1, 1942*

The editor has passed on to me the following communication received from "a regular reader of *Roy's Weekly*" who desires to be anonymous: "Your Wayfarer's news and comments are of exceptional interest in these critical times. Four weeks ago he hinted that Whitehall was astir and that after his return from Washington Mr Churchill had decided on Mr Amery vacating the India Office. Three weeks ago, when the cables from London were silent, your Wayfarer gave out the news that a new announcement was definitely in store for India and that Sir Stafford Cripps would be included in the British Cabinet. Then a fortnight ago he suggested that Lord Linlithgow was engaged in a silent war against the obduracy of Whitehall. Last week he announced that Sir Stafford Cripps' inclusion was the beginning of a new policy on India. Now, we have the announcement from Mr Churchill himself in reply to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, that a new policy would be announced. I am so interested in these developments. Can your Wayfarer throw some further light ?"

It is rather difficult to be very assertive in politics. But the question of Mr Amery bidding good-bye to the India Office is only a matter of days. Nothing impressed Mr Churchill more in his visits to America than the fact that a bold and progressive policy about India was urgently needed to silence Americans whose support in the present war was so much wanted. But when Mr Churchill returned to London, he found that Mr Amery had queered the pitch for him and that it was not such an easy task to make a change in the India Office.

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In fact, Mr Amery was feeling more and more that he could not be replaced. And Mr Churchill found that the Parliamentary crisis he had to face was contributed among others by his friend Mr Amery. But Mr Churchill was not the person to be overawed like this. He spent days and nights in the lobbies of the House of Commons by speaking to groups of M. P.'s and impressing on them the need for a vote of confidence in the Government, but on the tacit condition that changes would be made early which would make the machinery of Government respond automatically to the changing needs of the war and ensure victory.

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The vote of confidence was given ; it had the effect of telling Hitler, Mussolini and other Axis authorities that Britain was determined on retaining the leadership of Mr Churchill to fight the war to victory. Then came the changes in the British Cabinet, swift and sweeping, which made every one in India feel that even Britain could shake off its conservatism. But Mr Amery was still there, undisturbed. That was the worry of political India.

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Yes, that still remains the worry. But let there be no misgivings. When the new announcement is made by Churchill's Cabinet, Mr Amery will find himself outside the

India Office. Mr Amery has committed himself too far and too irrevocably to the diehard elements to remain in the India Office, when a fresh policy is actually announced. As I said last week, the inclusion of Sir Stafford Cripps was aimed at diluting Mr Amery's opposition to any change.

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Of course, Mr Amery has friends in the House of Commons, like Sir Alfred Knox, who think it is "lunacy" to make any change in the British Government's policy about India. And he has also friends in India like Mr Jinnah who wrote to Sir George Schuster that Mr Amery was the only friend of Muslim India and that the declaration of August 1940 was the quintessence of all wisdom and statesmanship. Not only Mr Jinnah and his few satellites, but a few ICS Governors and the bulk of the British members of the ICS are with and behind Mr Amery in his "no-change" policy.

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But they forget there is a war on and that the Japanese, having taken Singapore and almost swallowed a good bit of Burma and bombed the Andaman Islands, are making a bold bid for an invasion of the east coast of India. The Commander-in-Chief of India knows the position and has made no secret of it in his speeches to the members of the Central Legislature. Mr Jinnah has not even cared to attend and listen to these facts of the situation.

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When Britain is in a mood to respond to the appeal of India for a bold gesture of goodwill and friendship, no Indian should stand in the way, nor should any Indian dilute the demand of the people for freedom. Mr Jinnah and his few friends are mentioned to be in the first category, and I have heard it said that some friends associated with the Sapru Group belong to the second. The future course of events will demarcate the position of these friends more clearly.

But, meanwhile, is there any Indian who would publicly proclaim that he is against the Defence portfolio being entrusted to an Indian? This question needs no answer. But in the supreme legislative body in India there were a handful of Indians who actually spoke and voted against the Defence portfolio being entrusted to Indians. And they displayed this patriotism of theirs, even at a time when an elected member of the European Group voted for the proposition. Why did they do it? How can Indians have respect for this class of Indians? They have written themselves down in Indian legislative history, and there let their deeds shine. India marches on.

Now, for the Sapru Conference school of thought. There are some in it who are radical and who would refuse to deflate the demand of India for freedom. But there are others who would be guiled by promises of tinkering changes in certain parts of the constitution. As Sir Radhakrishnan stated at the Poona session of the Sapru Conference in July last, the good should not be the enemy of the better and the best. I am glad that Sir Tej Bahadur himself was neither elated nor dejected over Mr Churchill's reply to his cable.

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The ICS regime should end without delay. But the will of the electorate should not be ignored. The Congress should be brought back to run the administration, and if they fail, only then should others step in, and not otherwise. It is possible that when the Congress are asked to form new Ministries they will endeavour to see that the executive reflects the composition of the legislatures. Herein lies the opportunity of successful working of provincial autonomy.

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As for the Centre, we must await the announcement to be made in a few days. But everything will depend on the nature of the declaration to be made. It must not be a rigmarole like that of 1917 one, 'of increasing association of

Indians with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire'. It must be a simple formula, stated in simple and explicit terms, which the man in the street will instinctively feel as giving him what the Duke of Connaught declared in 1921 as "Swaraj".

## 2. "GIVE US FREEDOM—WE WILL FINISH THE JOB"

*March 15, 1942*

The political leadership of India will in a few days be on trial. Its patriotism is not doubted but its capacity for statesmanship and courage will be tested, as never before. Sir Stafford Cripps is coming to India with certain proposals of the British Government which would form the basis of their new policy about India. He will discuss them with Indian political leaders in order to obtain their general acceptance before an announcement of the new policy is made.

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It was not the resolutions of the Sapru Conference or the cable sent to Mr Churchill at Washington that is responsible for the new policy to be announced. Mr Churchill has made it perfectly plain at the outset of his statement. It is "the crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance". Again, we have it on the authority of Mr Churchill that "India has a great part to play in the struggle for freedom from the Axis Powers and that her helping hand must be extended in loyal comradeship to the valiant people who have fought alone so long".

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So, but for the Japanese invasion, and again, but for the recent admonitions of Marshall Chiang Kai-Shek, there would have been no attempt at "the proposed constructive contribution to aid India in the realization of full self-government".

Let the Indian Press and Indian political leaders be clear about this. There appears to be an impression in some quarters that the British Government have already decided on the terms of the announcement and that the Indian leaders are merely to receive them as the final gift from Sir Stafford Cripps' hands.

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What Sir Stafford Cripps comes to India with are but the 'conclusions of the War Cabinet'. Mr Amery is not a part of the War Cabinet. He might have been brought into the consultations in the usual course. But Mr Amery is still the Secretary of State for India and his powers for mischief cannot be doubted. Then, there is still the British Parliament, that microcosm of British interests and British prejudices, which cannot be ignored. So, even at the London end, the announcement to be made is still in the stage of 'proposals'.

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At the Indian end, therefore, also they should be treated as such by leaders of political India. A visit by a British Cabinet Minister to see if the terms could be safely and confidently announced can only mean that the "united conclusions of the War Cabinet" are not final and unchangeable if they are held to be unacceptable by leaders of India. So let not political India be hustled into accepting whatever Sir Stafford Cripps might bring; let the proposals be examined in the light of the main test, whether they transfer power irrevocably and unequivocally from the vested interests of Britain to the millions of India.

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Mr Churchill's statement has already an ominous ring in that there are references to Britain's obligations to minorities including the depressed classes, their treaty obligations with Indian Princes and further, "certain lesser matters arising out of Britain's long association with the fortunes of the Indian sub-continent". So it appears that the proposals of a new



policy are to be hedged round by conditions and reservations. India would not object to any conditions and reservations provided they are demonstrably in the interests of her freedom and progress. In other words, they should not prejudice the immediate grant of freedom.

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The proposals are said to be in two parts ; one for the future and the other for immediate action. The "immediate" or the present should not sabotage the "future". In fact, both should be treated as complementary and viewed from the one and only test as to the genuine transfer of real power so as to make every one in India feel that he is free to regulate his own affairs and shape his country's destiny, according to his best lights.

Mr Churchill has often said during this war : "Give us the tools, and we will finish the job." Indian leaders should tell Sir Stafford Cripps quite frankly and unhesitatingly : "Give us Freedom, and we will finish the job." This should be the motto on everybody's lips when Sir Stafford Cripps arrives in India with the British Government's scheme. This is what Mr Rajagopalachari has been saying with considerable emphasis during his present tour of the southern presidency.

\*

I give expression to the millions of this vast country when I say that the declaration of Freedom should, as I wrote last week, be simple and sweet and not couched in the language of lugubration which the patient strongly suspects of being poison. If the preamble of the announcement to be made does not contain some such declaration of freedom, it will not be worth looking into. And once there is a satisfactorily worded declaration of freedom, the burden for settlement shifts on to the shoulders of Indian leaders.

\*

Sir Stafford Cripps is coming to India to gauge whether the Indian demand for freedom is wholehearted and genuine.

Let not the Indian leaders fail to stand the test. Let them express the throbbings of the inarticulate millions for freedom. If they do it, then Sir Stafford Cripps' duty will be to inform London of the fact and ensure a declaration of it. But if there is weakness in our own demand, then why expect Britain to grant us freedom? Let us not delude ourselves in the belief that Sir Stafford Cripps will solve our troubles. Britain knows that the Indian leaders are united on the demand and is sending out an emissary to make sure of it. Let not therefore the Indian leaders waver or falter in this supreme hour.

Once a declaration of freedom is made, then it will be worth while to examine the merits of the scheme proposed for the present as well as for the future. India abounds in constitutional experts who will frame a perfect scheme which can stand the test of time and the superior taste of British experts as well. The Egyptian precedent is often quoted, but let us not forget that it had safeguards and qualifications which it took some time to get over. India cannot bind herself to such conditions, knowing the experience of Egypt. We must, here, be on our guard.

\*

As Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel has said, the sands are running out; or as *The Evening News* put it more pointedly, the Japanese will not wait on conferences or prolonged bargaining. The Japanese are rushing towards India, and His Excellency General Wavell has publicly referred to the dangers that threaten India, after the fall of Singapore and the capture of lower Burma. Let us therefore hope that Sir Stafford Cripps will arrive without delay and announce, equally without delay, the grant of freedom. That will be the best answer to Japan and the most effective antidote to the panic that has taken possession of Indian minds. The situation will be transformed in a minute and India will be able not only to save herself but also to aid China with a willing heart.

The words "too late" are already written on the mission of Sir Stafford. But better late than never, explains the optimist. Of course, there is communalism in the country. But it will assuredly melt in the sunshine of India's freedom. This has been the result in other countries which have got freedom. India can be no exception. Anyway, what has communalism got to do with the right of the people to freedom, and how can it be denied, when India demands it with one united voice ? The duty of the leaders is merely to adopt the slogan : "Give us Freedom : We shall finish the Job."

### 3. TOTAL WAR REQUIRES TOTAL FREEDOM

*March 22, 1942.*

Sir Stafford Cripps is still in Cairo *en route* to India. The proposals of the British War Cabinet are with him in a sealed cover. His stay at Cairo and discussions with the leaders of the Egyptian nation are intended to gauge whether, in the light of their experience, they are at least now satisfied with the political freedom which they obtained 29 years ago, and to what extent the lessons obtained there would be useful in his forthcoming negotiations with the Indian leaders.

\*

Sir Stafford is yet to determine the method and manner of approach before the Indian leaders, vis-a-vis the proposals of the British War Cabinet. Until we all know what these proposals are and what they mean to India by way of political freedom and power, how can we determine our attitude ? And yet the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri has come out of his retirement, though with supplicatory hands, to exhort the Indian leaders : "Give up extreme demands which the British Government cannot grant. Compromise is not only necessary but honourable."

Mr Sastri has rushed in too early. Let him and others of his way of thinking observe the golden rule of silence for some time yet. But it is necessary to scotch the mentality which breeds or suggests compromise on fundamentals. There can be no compromise with Britain now on the principle of Freedom. Thank God, there are not many to share the timid views of retired politicians in this revolutionary age. The leaders of the political and other organizations who have been invited to meet Sir Stafford in Delhi have done well in stating in advance that they would in the first instance come alone and see what the proposals are, and then only determine whether there was any good in bringing others in for discussion with the British Ambassador. This attitude has been made clear by Maulana Azad on behalf of the Congress, by Mr Jinnah on behalf of the Muslim League, and perhaps, it will be the same by the Jam Sahib on behalf of the Chamber of Princes.

\*

Sir Stafford's visit has undoubtedly set India a-thinking. The great and the knowing are circumspect and silent. Sir Stafford's friend, Pandit Nehru, by his silence at this hour, has impressed political India. That shows the attitude of caution that should characterize the approach of the Indian nation as a whole to the proposals of the British War Cabinet. If Sir Stafford comes to India as a messenger of freedom, he is doubly welcome. But if he comes with anything less than freedom and to use his powers of advocacy and to exploit his friendship with certain Congress leaders for it, then it does not require a prophet to say that his mission is doomed to failure.

\*

For India is not prepared to be satisfied with mere expansions of the Viceroy's Executive Council or even with the restoration of popular Governments in the Provinces while the Centre is dominated by the British element in the services who have taken care to entrench themselves in every

branch of the administration. The change of political atmosphere, to be wrought by any declaration to be made, must be manifest through every layer of the administration from top to bottom, as much at the Centre as in the Provinces. This can come only with an unequivocal declaration of India's freedom. Can Sir Stafford say that his sealed cover contains this declaration? Yet, that is the need of the hour.

\*

For the Government and the people in India are two separate entities. They must be intertwined into one single whole in order to prosecute the war to save India and also to give aid to China which has been facing the Japanese unaided for nearly five years. If China has faced the Japanese for five years and if Russia has been able to stem the tide of Nazi attacks so successfully, it is because in both these countries the Government and the people are one and the same and not separate entities as in India. Their independence is the root cause of their inherent strength in fighting the enemy. Can we not say that of India ?

\*

Already people are fleeing from Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and other coastal towns. It shows that they have no confidence in Government's resources to face any enemy attack from air or sea. It was not a fifth-columnist or the scare-mongering politician but the Deputy Chief of the General Staff in India, General Molesworth, who, speaking at the Delhi Rotary Club, confessed that Britain depended on America for supplies, and whatever the Americans might say, these supplies are always ten months behind time and that is the whole difficulty.

\*

The war has gone on for 30 months. The attitude of Britain towards Indians has been one of complete mistrust. Hongkong fell, but it made no difference to Britain's attitude towards India. Malaya fell and there was no change.

Singapore—that much-boasted bastion of India's defence—fell, like a ripe fruit, into the hands of the Japanese, and still no change. Southern Burma gone, and there was just a realization that something should be done. The rebuke of Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek opened the eyes of the British Government. Hence the visit of Sir Stafford Cripps.

\*

The occasion is not a suitable one for bargaining, though the British nation is noted for being one of hard-headed businessmen. This is not the time for holding hush-hush consultations or miniature round table conferences; there is no meaning in sending the Lord Privy Seal to India by air except to deliver what the British Government are prepared to part with, finally, irrevocably and unequivocally. This is not the time to "sound" the opinion of Indians; this is the time to grant them freedom and rally them in a united war effort. Total war requires total freedom. Is Britain prepared for it? If there are to be conditions, are they to be in the interests of India, and if so, for how long?

\*

Freedom is for the entire country, not for one class or community. It is as much for the man toiling in the village field as for the Indian Prince in his palace at the State capital. That, at any rate, must be the object of summoning the leaders of the Chamber of Princes or the Landholders' Association or the labourers organization or the Congress or the League to New Delhi next week. And such freedom must be witnessed not in the immediate recall of the Governor-General or Governors or the retirement of the British troops as happened in Ireland, but in the present total war effort being organized and run by Indian leaders who must be trusted to know the safety and the interests of their country better than the Viceroy or the British members of the Indian Civil Service.

## DENIAL OF DEFENCE MEANS DENIAL OF FREEDOM ITSELF

*March 29, 1942.*

A great Press feast is on in New Delhi with Sir Stafford Cripps in our midst. He has amazing vitality which the Hon. Dr E. Raghavendra Rau would be the first to envy. The more he talks with leaders of parties in India and the pressmen in New Delhi, the greater is his effulgence. And the fact that he made Mahatma Gandhi leave his hermitage at Sevagram and travel to far New Delhi, only demonstrates the faith that political India had in Sir Stafford who immediately on arrival declared himself as "the friend of India".

\*

As I write, the interviews are on. There is a never-ending procession of leaders, a quick exchange of views, a warm shaking of hands, the camera men and the movie "shooters" busy, the journalists ready to "sense" and splash the news. I say "sense the news", because the proposals of the British Government are to be published only on Monday morning, and they will be made available to pressmen on Sunday evening.

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But the proposals had been sensed all right. And Sir Stafford has confessed that except for the rewording of one sentence he has had to make no change. This does not mean that the proposals are such as to be acceptable ; my information leads me to the conclusion that they will be rejected by the Congress. Any scheme which does not carry with it the support of the Congress is bound to be rejected by the country as a whole.

\*

And why will the Congress reject the scheme ? Chiefly because, Defence is not to be transferred to Indian control during this war. The argument in Congress circles is clearly

this : Well, God knows what will be the position after the war. What we can do during this war is all that we can be sure of. Defence is wanted for the "defence of India". This argument has gone home, and I have not come across a single person who has had an interview with Sir Stafford who has not emphasized this point before me.

Sir Stafford winds up every day with a conference with the Viceroy at 10 p.m., when the day's bag is spread on the table and London is apprised of it by cable. If London has not authorized Sir Stafford and the Viceroy to make the change in favour of immediate transfer of Defence, then Sir Stafford's mission is a failure. He need not have travelled 6,000 miles, for it only shows that the lesson from Malaya and Burma has not been learnt by the British Government.

\*

No one wants Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to fail, and yet, I fear, it will fail. Why ? For the very simple reason that London is still to authorize Sir Stafford to announce the complete transfer of Government to Indian leaders. The war has been on for 30 months. And even as Sir Stafford was discussing the situation with General Wavell at the Viceroy's House, there came the news that the Andaman Islands had also fallen to the Japs. What has the Commander-in-Chief of India to say about it ?

\*

General Wavell in his talks with pressmen made no secret of the "failures and miscalculations" of the past. His deputy Chief of General Staff has publicly revealed that the equipment for which we rely on America is always ten months behind time. So it is difficult to catch up with lost time. When such are the sad confessions of military experts who are defending India and who want more of support from Indians, is this the time to higggle and haggle, and bargain and negotiate?



The stage for negotiations intended to retain control over Defence in British Government's hands is past. Either give it now, immediately, with full grace, and be prepared to be guided by the Indian Minister who has also common sense and the interest of his country at heart, or declare: "We don't mean to give it, whatever happens." Defence impinges upon every branch of administration and upon practically all spheres of activity during the war. So withholding of Defence means holding back in miserly clutch the golden gift of responsible government itself.

Indeed, as an ex-premier who has seen Sir Stafford wrote to me two days ago: "The weakness of Indian Defence arises out of her unnatural political condition. The problem of the political relationship between Britain and India is also the problem of how to get over the Indian unconcern for her own defence. We should fix our eyes on the defence of India now." Let Sir Stafford note this while there is yet time and adjust his scheme before it is published.

\*

Of course, Mahatma Gandhi is not interested in the defence of India in the military sense of the term. His ways and methods are different. That is why Gandhiji's talk with Sir Stafford yesterday related to anti-all-wars, and weather, food, health, etc. That means that Sir Stafford's proposals cut no ice with Gandhiji. Nobody has been able to convert Gandhiji so far. And Gandhiji is India—in the political sense. Lord Linlithgow has known this for six long years. Sir Stafford has learnt it now.

\*

But Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru are seeing Sir Stafford tomorrow (Sunday) before the proposals are released to the Press. Unless there is an eleventh-hour change conceding the minimum demand which the military situation has accentuated, there need be no interest evinced in the scheme Sir Stafford has already sensed it; the British Government

know it ; why not be frank about it and make the defence of India the concern not of His Majesty's Government but of India and Indians?

The Congress Working Committee is to meet tomorrow (Sunday) and the Muslim League Working Committee and the Mahasabla Committee are also meeting tomorrow. I know them all well enough to say that they will have the courage to reject the scheme. Courage to reject is sometimes greater than courage to accept ; and the present is the supreme hour for it. I am sure the Congress will refuse Sir Stafford to exploit his friendship with Pandit Nehru and a few others. Sir Stafford Cripps' tactics savour of peace-time circumstances.

\*

India wants freedom immediately, and not as a post-war gift. That freedom must be given in terms of the defence of India being controlled and directed by an Indian. Transfer of Defence makes freedom doubly sure. The withholding of it now is a denial of freedom. What is the use of giving the Supply Department to an Indian, when the Supply Department is a cent per cent Defence affair? What is the use of giving Commerce to an Indian, when the Commerce Department is an 80% Defence matter? What is the use of Indianizing Finance when again it is 80% Defence affair—during the war? And which Indian Finance Minister is going to find money for this total war when Defence is not entrusted to Indians? Total war, therefore, requires total freedom. There can be no escaping it.

But we are told that India will have complete freedom after the war, with even the right to secede from the British Empire. Ah, what a prospect! The constitution-making body after the war will revolve for months and years like the round table conferences of the past, with the representatives of the British Government anxious to see that there is provision in it for safeguards for religious and racial minorities, the British vested interests (whose representatives Sir Stafford

met yesterday), safeguards for the Princes in accordance with their treaty rights, etc. etc.

The scheme promises a treaty of alliance between the British Government and the Indian Government to be set up as a result of the conclusions of the constitution-making body. But we want a treaty of alliance now, at this hour, for the defence of India, for the freedom of India. We do not want a post-dated cheque which carries no value in the present-day world situation.

## **5. CRIPPS MISSION FAILS**

**Settle now with the Mahatma**

**APRIL 12, 1942.**

So political India has had the courage to reject the British Government's offer. The grand mission of Sir Stafford Cripps has ended in an unhappy failure. He had evidently banked on his friendship with one or two Congress leaders, but found that they are greater patriots of India than his friends. The terms of the declaration he brought from England as being "the just and final" offer to India contained no guarantee of full freedom. On the other hand, they prejudged the several issues involved—for instance, Pakistan—and the declaration therefore carried with it its own failure.

\*

Eighteen days of hard toil have ended in vain. Sir Stafford for his part had spared no pains and brought to bear on his task a power of endurance and a degree of intellectual vigour which are unexampled in the history of political missions. But equally clearly for the first time in the history of the Indian National Congress (and, perhaps, also of the Muslim League) there was witnessed a continuous session of the Working Committee which stood the stress and strain of British diplomacy and American propaganda.



The "take it or leave it" attitude of Sir Stafford Cripps did not last long, and the Lord Privy Seal developed into a full-fledged bargainer, with the words: "The scheme promises self-government to India. A generally acceptable line of practical action can be laid down now, and the main obstacle to India's full co-operation in her own defence will have been removed." The Indian leaders scanned the terms of the declaration and found that Defence itself was denied and, therefore, self-government.

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While the Congress Working Committee was examining the scheme one way, Mahatma Gandhi was looking at it in another way. The readiness of the Congress leaders to take up the responsibility of Indian administration at this hour was not shared by the Mahatma who had his own specific to meet the Japanese or any other aggression. Sir Stafford had realized this when he had his conversation with Gandhiji. His suspicion as to the efficacy of the British Government's declaration began to grow, but he relied on the resourcefulness of Pandit Nehru, his warm-hearted friend.

In the Congress Working Committee there were three forces at work. The Gandhian school led by Sardar Vallabh-bhai Patel was opposed to the scheme all along the line. Mr Rajagopalachari and his friends were prepared to examine the scheme with every desire to accept it, provided there was a genuine transfer of Defence, and the Governor-General at the Centre and the Governors in the provinces became mere constitutional heads pledged to give full scope to the Indian ministries. As for Pandit Nehru, the more he conferred with Sir Stafford Cripps the more he felt impressed by the view-point of Mr Rajagopalachari.

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And so Pandit Nehru easily became the central figure and the moving spirit of the Congress Working Committee in session. He drove to Sir Stafford and came back to Birla

House. Then the Gandhian school's doubts raised by Mr Vallabhbhai Patel had to be cleared. And so Maulana Azad, the Congress President, was taken with him to have the doubts cleared on the spot. The discussions became more and more interminable, the issues more and more involved. The details threatened to devour the principle. The demand of the Indian people for full freedom was, at one stage, almost forgotten.

\*

Mahatma Gandhi became very uneasy. Having exhausted himself before Sir Stafford Cripps, he had no mind to answer the doubts of his colleagues in the Working Committee. He retired into a corner and only heard the whispers of the big room in the Birla House. And whenever anyone approached him for advice, whoever was the person, he had one common remedy. Rebuke, Rebuke, Rebuke. The climax was reached when he suddenly decided to address the Congress Working Committee as well as the journalists assembled at Birla House and leave for Sevagram.

The members of the Congress Working Committee realized to what extent the non-violent Mahatma Gandhi could be furious and reproachful over their interest in the study of the Government's scheme. And there was a ring of agony and pathos in the words that were uttered before the journalists outside. "If I did not believe in the actuality of the message of non-violence, I would have gone away long ago. Now I am going to live my message of non-violence." There was no mistaking the meaning of his parting message. It was a warning to the Congress Working Committee and a hint of his breaking away from it on principle.

\*

I sensed a danger signal in the fact of Gandhiji leaving Delhi in the midst of the negotiations. But Sir Stafford heeded it not. Pandit Nehru might yet deliver the goods; he showed a rare combination of being both sincere and

accommodating. The negotiations were therefore kept up, unaided by the nimble brain of Mr Rajagopalachari.

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And there was a fresh breeze. Colonel Louis Johnson, the Personal Envoy of President Roosevelt, arrived in New Delhi and was introduced to Pandit Nehru. They were attracted to each other. One does not know what Whitehouse had told Whitehall; but in India we know what Col. Louis Johnson told Pandit Nehru. "We, Americans, will endorse the post-dated cheque that is offered by the British Government. We shall stand guarantee for India's attainment of freedom after the war. We are already in India defending your soil from the Japanese invasion. Now let us pool our resources, and drive the Japanese out."

\*

Pandit Nehru was earnest for a solution. But was the principle of Indian Freedom agreed? The acid test was the appointment of an Indian as the Defence Minister. It was the test of the measure of the transfer of power. And so there began another round of consultations and the report got abroad that the patient was showing signs of recovery under the effect of the American medicine. But the American medicine was no more efficacious than the British medicine.

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For, according to the Congress demand, the Commander-in-Chief should be at the head of the War Department and be the extra-ordinary member of the Central Cabinet, and in control of the war activities of the armed forces in India. The Defence Department itself should be placed in charge of a representative Indian member who would control all matters relating to Defence including those now dealt with by the Defence Co-ordination Department. But the Johnson formula insisted on the War Member being a member of the Central Cabinet.

There was thus a vital difference. The outlook changed. The gulf could not be bridged. And Sevagram which has been telephoned continued to be indifferent. With the best will in the world, no improvement was possible. All the sections in the Congress Working Committee rallied to say NO. It was sent to Sir Stafford Cripps. It made the Congress position clear. The constitution must be changed now to permit the formation of a truly National Government with full power.

Sir Stafford replied: "These involve constitutional changes on a very large scale which are not possible now during the war. Were such a system to be introduced by convention, the Cabinet would be responsible to no one but itself, could not be removed and would in fact constitute an absolute dictatorship of the majority. And this suggestion is rejected by all minorities in India. Nor would it be consistent with the pledges given for protection of minority rights."

\*

The Congress rejoinder was lengthy but clinched the issues boldly. By the way, is any one surprised to learn from Sir Stafford that the question of making the Central Cabinet responsible by convention instead of by elaborate changes in the Act as was done in Canada when by a mere instruction the Governor-General became a figurehead, was not discussed at any stage in the eighteen days' negotiations? Sir Stafford himself was at one time the author of this suggestion in the British Parliament. Now he is a member of the British Cabinet.

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Hence a different tone, a different outlook. The draft declaration is dead. Sir Stafford is returning tomorrow by air to London. He has thrown out a gentle hint that he would one day return to India. In what capacity I cannot say yet. For the moment, the panic has disappeared from the Viceroy's

House and from his "expanded Council". But what next?

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That is an interesting question. It cannot be the iron rule, so long as Lord Linlithgow is the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi dominates over the political field."

## 6. HOPES & FEARS ABOUT C. R.-JINNAH MEETING

[After a lapse of four months, there was a meeting between C. R. and Mr Jinnah on the implications of Pakistan and self-determination. The hopes and fears aroused by that meeting were recorded as follows in my diary of November 8, 1942 reproduced below.]

Mr Rajagopalachari will again be in Delhi, this time to meet Mr Jinnah. This has aroused both hope and fear. Hope—that behind the intransigence of Mr Jinnah there may yet be found the basis for an understanding between the two major communities in the country. Fear—that in his anxiety to form a National Government and thereby ward off a possible Japanese attack, C. R. may walk further into Mr Jinnah's parlour and offer "concessions" which would militate against the progress of India as a nation.

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Which will triumph, hope or fear? C. R. alone will be in a position to answer. But the man in the street who has read Mr Jinnah's Aligarh speeches and his earlier utterances has more fear than hope, especially as C. R.'s inclinations have been to ignore the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, etc. The new scheme which he propounded a fortnight back with an air of impeccability, combined with the warning that if it was not adopted by the Congress and the League, then both would lose their respective leadership, has met with a hostile reception everywhere.



Mr Jinnah wants Pakistan here and now. That is the meaning of his demand for a Muslim plebiscite and a bare majority vote. But C. R. who is not a believer in Pakistan, would like to kill it by conceding its principle now. What is Pakistan? Mr Jinnah stated in July that "in a nutshell, it is a demand for carving out of India a portion to be wholly treated as an Independent and Sovereign State". Gandhiji's reaction was this: "If Pakistan, as defined above, is an article of faith with Mr Jinnah, then indivisible India is an article of faith with me. Hence there is a stalemate." And Gandhiji in effect warned India against accepting Mr Jinnah's demand on the ground that a Pakistan State might make treaties with neighbouring Muslim States and go into war with the rest of India.

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Even in July 1940 when C. R. made the sporting offer of India's premiership to Mr Jinnah, what was the demand of the Congress of which C. R. was the principal author? "A provisional national government constituted at the Centre, which though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature." But when Sir Stafford Cripps came with his "vicious and wicked scheme", and said "Take it or leave it", the Congress leaders who included C. R. should have made this their counter-offer and said "Take it or leave it". Instead, there were wearisome parleys on a schedule of imaginary Defence responsibility, ignoring the first essential of what is meant by "National Government".

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Mr Jinnah did well at the time in not entangling himself in all these cobwebs. He was certainly shrewder than the Congress leaders, excepting, of course, Mahatma Gandhi, who left them high and dry. And it is with that shrewd Mr Jinnah that C. R. will negotiate this week. Let C. R. understand Mr Jinnah's technique by reading the

speeches and statements of the leader of the League. Mr Jinnah will say: "We [Mussalmans] are 100 millions." C. R. should prick the bubble and state the fact. Then Mr Jinnah will say: "We are 65% in the Indian Army." C. R. should prick this bubble also, and state: "You are only 32%." Mr Jinnah will say: "The Hindus have no guts. A Mussalman has 500 times more nuisance value than a Hindu." Is it necessary to suggest an answer?

\*

Mr Jinnah will be after Pakistan. I have already once alluded to Gandhiji's view which cannot be ignored merely because he is in detention. Quite recently Mr Jinnah has made it abundantly clear that what he wants is two portions of India, one in the North-West and the other in the North-East, where Muslims are in the majority. He claims that this area represents one-fourth of India, and so he is making over to the Hindus three-fourths. Let us not be misled by these tactics of Mr Jinnah. Let him specify what are the areas which would constitute these two Pakistans or Sovereign Muslim States in India and then only it would be possible to judge whether it is one-fourth or more.

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Then again, let Mr Jinnah remove another doubt. Did he or did he not ask before Sir Stafford Cripps for a corridor between the two Pakistan States, traversing through the northern belt of U. P. and Bihar? This question was posed in these columns several months ago and has remained unanswered. C. R. would do well to take it up. He knows the history of the Polish Corridor in Europe and what fate it has met in the hands of Hitler. These may be embarrassing questions when delicate negotiations for an understanding are in progress, but they cannot be lost sight of without detriment to a real settlement for national progress.

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Then again, Mr Jinnah will insist on the principle of

self-determination for the Muslims in the Pakistan areas. This principle was never meant to be used for vivisectioning a country for administration, but only to be applicable to certain questions connected with religious and allied safeguards of a minority. We all know the history of the principle of self-determination ever since it was raised in Europe. As M. Clemenceau (as stated by Baron Keynes) observed: "It would be stupid to believe that there is any sense in the principle of self-determination except that it is an ingenious formula for rearranging the balance of power in one's own interests."

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In Ireland they did not produce a scheme like the one attempted in India before Ireland got freedom. I repeat that the Westminster Statute can be amended by the British Parliament at any moment, if it so wills, by adding the word "India" in clause I and providing that the amended section should come into operation six months after the cessation of hostilities. This is a surer guarantee of India's independence than was sought to be conferred after the war under the Cripps' formula with its Pakistan and Rajastan divisions. As for the immediate present, whatever scheme is evolved should be in consultation with the Congress leaders now lodged in jails, but embodying the vital element of responsibility to the Legislature which must be carved out anew by a general election.

## 7. LINLITHGOW ALSO FAILS—SYSTEM AT FAULT

As Lord Linlithgow's term as Viceroy was the longest on record, the announcement about his successor was made a few months before, in October 1942. What I wrote at the time may be of interest.

"In April next, a post carrying a salary of Rs. 21,333

per month will fall vacant. It is the Viceroyalty of India. Lord Linlithgow has carried the burden for seven years without any thought of suicide. When on two previous occasions his term was extended, it was not of his seeking. The British Government had pressed it on him. But my impression is that the British Government will not now conscript Lord Linlithgow for another year as Viceroy. He has been the Viceroy of India longer than any of the seventeen Viceroys who have gone before him.

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It started with the Earl of Canning in 1858, on whose advice India was placed under the administration of the Crown. Then came the Earl of Elgin who was Viceroy scarcely for a year when he died campaigning at Dhomsala in 1863. Baron Lawrence started his career as Assistant Collector and rose to be the Viceroy of India from 1863 to 1869. The Earl of Mayo was assassinated in 1872, after 3 years of Viceroyalty. The Earl of Northbrook who succeeded Mayo had the courage of his convictions, and resigned in 1876 when his policy was overruled by the Secretary of State.

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During the Viceroyalty of the Earl of Lytton, Queen Victoria took the title of Empress of India. Few Viceroys would admit to so un-Viceregal a pursuit as poetry. But it was the unique glory of Lytton that he aspired to be a poet under the name of Owen Meredith. Lytton was followed in 1880 by Ripon who is to this day remembered with gratitude for his efforts at making the Britisher and Indian equal in the eyes of the law. The Marquess of Dufferin made his Viceroyalty of 1884-88 memorable by the annexure of Burma. Lansdowne (1888-94) and Elgin (1894-99) had trouble in the Frontier, especially when the Afridis seized the Khyber Pass in 1897.

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From 1899, the imperious Marquess of Curzon ruled

India in regal splendour for six years. The partition of Bengal and the Coronation Durbar of 1903 were the highlights of his Viceroyalty. After Curzon came the Earl of Minto, whose name is associated with the Minto-Morley reforms of 1909. From 1910 to 1916, Viscount Hardinge ruled India and won great popularity with the Indian Princes. His Viceroyalty was rendered memorable by the visit of King George and Queen Mary to India, and by the shifting of the capital of the Indian Empire from Calcutta to Delhi.

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The Viceroyalty of Viscount Chelmsford (1916-21) who was responsible with Mr Edwin Montagu for introducing the system of diarchy, witnessed the Amritsar disturbance, of 1919. The Moplah risings took place during the tenure of the Marquess of Reading (1921-26). Reading sent Mahatma Gandhi to gaol for six years, but released him after two years. Lord Irwin (now Viscount Halifax) was Viceroy for five years from 1926-31, and broke new ground by holding personal conversations with Mahatma Gandhi. He made a Pact with Mahatma Gandhi, and the Civil Disobedience movement was called off. During his time, the Simon Commission also came to India.

\*

Lord Linlithgow's immediate predecessor was Lord Willingdon who became Viceroy in 1931. He swore that he would destroy the Congress. In the last year of his office, the India Act of 1935 was passed and Lord Linlithgow was sent out to India to work it. For nearly seven years now, Lord Linlithgow has worked it. He has worked it to death. In six Provinces, autonomy has long ago ceased to exist. In fact, the provincial administrations are being carried on not under the Act of 1935, but under the "break-down" provisions of the Act whose lease Mr Amery has now made co-extensive with the war and one year thereafter.

Federation is as dead as the Dodo of Mauritius. And in the Centre, the position is virtually that of the Mont-Ford scheme. Of course, the Viceroy's Council has been twice expanded. But tragedy overtook the expansion scheme from the very start. Sir Akbar Hydari was taken away by death. So also Dr Raghavendra Rao. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer washed his hands clean of the business after eighteen days. The post still remains unfilled, and at least one gentleman tried to qualify himself for it during the Council of State session by invoking the name of Lord Linlithgow so many times that I actually lost count.

\*

This is not the time for assessing Lord Linlithgow's career as the Viceroy and the Governor-General of India. There are already too many unkind critics who like to point to the failure of his Federation plan to fructify and the almost complete collapse of even provincial autonomy, not to speak of the stud-bull campaign. I hold an entirely different impression of Lord Linlithgow both as the Viceroy and as the man, and this I shall be giving in proper time.

\*

But this much I permit myself to say today. There have been battles between Lord Linlithgow the man and Lord Linlithgow the Viceroy. The public have a right to judge His Excellency the Viceroy, but in any estimate of his career the personal aspect cannot be ignored. And here we have the testimony of the greatest politician of the land, Mahatma Gandhi, delivered at the last session of the All-India Congress Committee in Bombay which the censor then thought it right to cut out.

\*

I quote from the verbatim report of Gandhiji's speech : "I have enjoyed the privilege of friendship, as I enjoy it today, with Lord Linlithgow. It is a friendship which has outgrown official relationship. Whether Lord Linlithgow will bear me

out I do not know, but there has sprung up a personal bond between him and myself. He once introduced me to his daughter. His son-in-law the A. D. C. was drawn towards me. He fell in love with Mahadev more than with me, and Lady Anne and he came to me. She is an obedient and favourite daughter. I take interest in their welfare."

And Gandhiji continued: "I take the liberty to give out these tit-bits only to give you an earnest of the personal bond which exists between us. And yet let me declare here that no personal bond will ever interfere with the stubborn struggle on which, if it falls to my lot, I may have to launch against Lord Linlithgow, as the representative of the Empire. It seems to me that I will have to resist the might of that Empire with the might of the dumb millions, with no limits but of non-violence as policy confined to this struggle. It is a terrible job to have to offer resistance to a Viceroy with whom I enjoy such relations. He has more than once trusted my word, often about my people. I mention this with great pride and pleasure. I mention it to testify that when the Empire forfeited my trust, the Englishman who was its Viceroy came to know of it."

\*

Since his return to India from South Africa, Gandhiji has seen and dealt with five Viceroys. But Lord Linlithgow alone gets the best chit from him. And why? Because he has known and judged Lord Linlithgow the man and appreciated his worth in that capacity. But Lord Linlithgow the Viceroy is perhaps a different personality. Referring to Lord Reading, Gandhiji once said: "If he cannot swallow the system, the system will swallow him." And that exactly happened. In the case of Lord Linlithgow, is it another case of the system having swallowed the Lord?

## 8. REITERATE THE FREEDOM DEMAND

[Before the second world war ended, the abortive Conference in Simla was held by Lord Wavell, and shortly after, came the Goodwill Delegation from the British Parliament. Both these aroused interest throughout the country and 1945 ended with the publication of the Sapru Committee Report. The currents of opinion at the time were recorded in the issues of *Roy's Weekly*, dated 24th June and 30th December, 1945 respectively.]

### Hopes and Fears of Wavell's Conference

*June 24, 1945.*

Messages from Bombay, where the Congress leaders had their preliminary consultations, have been altogether favourable to the Wavell plan. As I write, the leaders, as well as the premiers and ex-premiers, are on their way to Simla for the Conference summoned by the Viceroy. No party or person in India has advised outright rejection of the British proposals. Even Aravinda Ghose in his hermitage in Pondicherry has broken his silence to give his support. Is Wavell proving a wizard? He is known for his wise generalship in the battlefield. Is he equally good in the political field?

\*

Over three years ago, when Wavell was Commander-in-Chief of India, and Cripps was holding his confabulations, the Congress leaders who met him found that he was a great politician and statesman, besides being a General. The impression he created in the minds of the leaders about himself was most favourable. The Cripps Mission was a grand failure, and what Wavell offers now is in essence a repetition of the Cripps Offer. Still there is a wave of enthusiasm for it



now. Why ? Because Wavell talks straight and means well. What he feels he is prepared to do without delay. The moment he found that Gandhiji was right in insisting on an invitation being issued to the Congress President, he submitted to him and did not hesitate to say so.

\*

And from London comes a message containing a fulsome tribute to Lord Wavell paid by Lord Nuffield after the latter's talk with Mr Birla. He says · "Britain does not possess a more conscientious man. I am sure that everything he does or says comes straight from the heart. He would not do a dirty trick to anyone to please Britain or any section of opinion. He is a man with a conscience, a man who will only deal out equity and deal it out all the time." Now Wavell's sense of equity will be tested at the Simla Conference. Will he come out successful?

\*

The Simla Conference is to decide firstly whether the Wavell proposals are worth discussing at the Conference table. And it is to induce the leaders to view this point favourably that Lord Wavell has asked Mahatma Gandhi and Mr Jinnah to meet him informally on Sunday afternoon. But after the Bombay meeting of Congress leaders, Maulana Azad has also sought a similar audience and informal consultation. Wavell cannot possibly say "No" to this request from the Congress President. And the interview will take place, I suppose. Surely, Mr Jinnah cannot object.

\*

But if Mr Jinnah happens to object, then I expect that Lord Wavell will be firm and take no notice of it. I have a suspicion that Mr Jinnah knows the strength of mind of Lord Wavell. The Muslim League leader had occasion to meet Wavell as the Commander-in-Chief soon after the war broke out, and what happened then must surely be in the memory of the great QAIDE AZAM. Moreover, today the Muslim

are being given weightage in the Viceroy's Executive Council far beyond their expectation. They are conscious of it, and yet they are unreasonable.

\*

The complaint of political India is that the Indian National Congress is being treated by the British Government in the whole transaction as if it were a Caste-Hindu organization. Gandhiji has raised his powerful voice against it. He is aghast at this British colouring given to the Desai-Liaquat formula. We also know how when there was a Unity Conference held at Allahabad and the Hindus and Muslims were about to come to a settlement, the British Government intervened with their own award giving the Muslims the weightage and taking all the credit to themselves.

History has repeated itself. When Mr Bhulabhai Desai, as leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly, came to a pact with Nawabzada Liaquat Ali, the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League Party, for the purpose of a working unity in the house, the British Government smelt a rat and immediately summoned Lord Wavell to London, and in spite of their pre-occupations with a general election, authorized the Viceroy to announce an award of equal representation to the Muslims and Caste-Hindus and then hold a Conference to discuss details.

\*

Where is equity and conscience in treating the Congress as if it were a Caste-Hindu organization, and raising the Muslim League to the status of the only political organization for the Muslims which it is not? It is to the credit of the other Muslim organizations like the Majlis, Jamait-ul-Ulema, etc. among Muslims as indeed to the Hindu Mahasabha among the Hindus that they have not embarked on a raging and tearing campaign against the deal yet. This is because Gandhiji has himself taken up the matter and he is assisted by Maulana Azad.

"If parity between Muslims and the Caste-Hindus is unalterable, then my advice to the Congress will be not to participate in the formation of the Viceroy's Executive Council." This warning has been conveyed by Gandhiji to the Viceroy. There is no equivocation about it. Lord Wavell knows it. I have reason to believe that on this subject he has already been in cable correspondence with Whitehall. So I expect that he will be able to remove the difficulty in the way of the Congress taking a useful part in the Conference.

\*

If the British Government could dare to announce an award like this, with its communal colouring, on Indian politics, then Mahatma Gandhi is right in announcing his revolt against the proposals in advance of the Conference itself. But what will Mr Jinnah do? He is a problem to the Muslims, the Congress and the British. The Muslims admire his astuteness but do not admire his intransigence. The Congress likes Mr Jinnah because he was once a Congressman and hopes that the nationalism in him might once more surge upward. The British know him for his "nuisance value" but are not prepared to propitiate him for that.

\*

At any rate, Malik Khizzar Hayat, the Premier of the Punjab where it is not the Muslim League that rules but the Unionist Party, will be present at the Simla Conference as a Unionist and not as a Muslim Leaguer. Again, Dr Khan Sahib, the Premier of the Congress-run province of the North-west Frontier, will be present but not as a Muslim. And there will be Sir Muhammad Saadullah, the Premier of the North-east Frontier province (Assam) where the administration is run not in accordance with the Muslim League policy, but in the spirit of a concordat arrived at between the three parties in the legislature, including the Congress. The only province, where the Muslim League edict is supposed to run is Sind, wherefrom Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah will be

present at the Conference as the ally of Mr Jinnah.

\*

How can Mr Jinnah ride the high-horse or afford to displease the Viceroy or throw away the chance that is afforded to him to obtain some weightage to the Muslim League, if not to Muslims as a whole whom, as a community, the Congress, being a national organization, is prepared to serve.

\*

The text of the Desai-Liaquat formula has not yet seen the light of day. Gandhiji has got it and he has given out the substance of it. It is better to publish it for no other reason than to say that the denial of it by Nawabzada Liaquat on the floor of the Central Assembly was prompted by certain temporary party considerations. Again, Gandhiji sees in that formula the promise of the Muslims marching towards Indian Freedom. Let us hope that it is so, and there would be no occasion to regret it.

\*

There is yet another thing to be done. Mr Louis Fischer, in his *One Week With Gandhi* has recorded the sad feelings of the Mahatma at the failure of the Muslim League to join the Congress at the time of the Cripps negotiations. This is what Gandhiji told Fischer: "It was not only sad, it was disgraceful. But it was the fault of the League. Shortly after the war broke out, we were summoned to meet the Viceroy at New Delhi. Rajendra Prasad (a member of the Congress Working Committee) and I went to speak for the Congress and Mr Jinnah for the League. I asked Jinnah to confer with us in advance and face the British Government unitedly. We agreed to meet in New Delhi, but when I suggested that we both demand independence for India, he said 'I do not want independence.' "

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If Jinnah was against independence in 1940, is he for it now? If he is, let him say so. Then we would know our

common plan and common programme. Otherwise, what is the use of his compulsory coalition at the Centre (and possibly also later in the provinces as Lord Wavell hints) with the weightage given to the Muslims by the British hand by taking it out forcibly from the Hindu hand? The Muslim community would do well to declare itself for independence of India as a preliminary to any settlement of the political deadlock and pave the way for the setting up of a popular Government imbued with the genuine desire to hasten the day of Freedom.

## 9. ANGLO-MUSLIM ALLIANCE AGAINST SAPRU REPORT

*December 30, 1945.*

The year 1946 promises to be a year of great decisions and realignment of forces within India. Beginning with the visit of the M. P.'s from Britain there will be a series of events, in every one of which the character of Indians will be tested. Not only their character but their passion for Freedom as well. In the Central Assembly our new M. P.'s will find themselves face to face with issues projected by the British Government through the Budget and other means which will have far-reaching consequences. The rulers of Indian States are meeting in their annual session to decide to what extent they are prepared to help in the Freedom Movement. And later, when the provincial elections are over and the cabinets have been formed, Lord Wavell is to summon a conference of premiers of provinces in order to determine the composition of the Central Government, which in turn will be charged with the duty of setting up a Constituent Assembly. That Central Government, according to the September Declaration, should have the support of the main Indian parties.

A mere recital of the principal engagements reminds us of the words of Abraham Lincoln that the occasion is piled high with difficulties and that we must rise to the occasion. There is now a triangular war on in India. On one side there are the fire-eating communalists swearing by the creed of Pakistan and pledged to a division of India. On the second, there are the full-blooded nationalists thirsting for undiluted freedom, prepared to make any sacrifice for it except the division of India. On the third, there are the Imperialist masters with the spirit of Versailles Treaty and the power of the Atom Bomb, anxious still to preserve themselves as a first class nation on the resources of India and therefore pursuing the game of divide and rule, though in subtle forms.

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The path of even the practical constitutionalist and the moderate is thus strewn with difficulties. He has, therefore, to carry the spirit of compromise to the utmost extent but not to that of vivisection of India. The extent and the limit are true of the work done by the Constitutional Committee of which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru is easily the most outstanding figure. It was Lord Wavell who in February 1944, i.e. two years ago, warned that the framing of the future constitution is essentially and appropriately an Indian responsibility, and until they could agree on its form, a transfer of power could not be made. And he suggested that if Indians could devise a method which would produce an agreement more readily, so much the better.

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This was the genesis of the Sapru Committee. The Congress was in jails. The Leaguers looked askance at the Committee. Still the Committee had Muslims on it. All wisdom may not be centred in the Congress or the League or the Sapru Committee. But the Committee had a group of thinkers and observers as well as men with experience of administration in British India and Indian States. None of

them will seek the hustings ; it is doubtful if any one of them will ever be found in the new machinery that may be set up. They are all in fact aged men with no personal ambition. Their findings have been published. It so happened that on the day of the publication Lord Wavell was seen in the Andamans! His Excellency on his return to the Capital will have occasion to assess the reactions which the proposals of the Committee have evoked and report to London.

\*

There has been no dearth of Committees or of Constitutions evolved by them. There was the Motilal Nehru Committee's Report of 1926, there were constitutions framed by Mr Srinivasa Iyengar and others. Mr Jinnah has never been found on any of these Committees. But he found himself as recently as in 1940 caught by the word Pakistan. The British Government were given one year by the Congress to accept the Nehru Report. Nothing happened. And the Congress had to launch civil disobedience. Now we have the Sapru Report prepared by those whose selflessness cannot be questioned from any quarter. Still *Dawn*, the Muslim League organ, has described it as a comic opera report and consigned it to the W. P. B.

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The attitude of *Dawn* is understandable because the Sapru Committee has unequivocally rejected the Pakistan demand of the League. But the attitude of the *Statesman* is not understandable. It has described the Report as "out of date" because it does not satisfy the Muslims and asks the Britishers to redeem their pledge of giving self-government to India. The leading lights of the Congress will examine the document. Perhaps Mr Jinnah need not study it, after hearing the main contents over the radio. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has been given a copy personally by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru before the former left for Udaipur to preside over the annual session of the States Peoples Conference. We shall

undoubtedly hear his reaction. The portion relating to the States and their peoples in the Report is thought-provoking.

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The authors of the Report were not devising any formula as a way out of the present difficulty so much as laying down the broad principles which should govern the constitution of a Free India, principles which would enable the growth of one-fifth of humanity into a self-respecting race in the comity of nations. To the Indian States Peoples' Conference as well as to the Chamber of Princes that will be held a fortnight later, the report provides good enough meat in that the rulers are told that there should be no right of secession granted to any State and that all States should be treated as part of and as being within the Indian Union, united through the paramountcy at the Union Centre. The paramountcy of the British power is ruled out. The relief suggested to the peoples of the States is that the Federal Cabinet should have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of any State for protecting and promoting the welfare of the people.

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Not only no State can secede but no province can secede. This is another good recommendation which is well worth remembering by every one. It is a definite advance on the attitude of some members of the Sapru Committee themselves who in 1942 fell miserable victims of Crippsitis which meant the right of secession of States and provinces, thereby encouraging Pakistan. Any province or State desirous of seceding from the Indian Union would be treated as having revolted against the Constitution, says the Committee. There is no disputing the correctness of the idea.

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Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Report to a solution of the constitutional problem lies in the thoroughness with which it exposes the Anglo-Muslim alliance in the introduction of a separate electorate system since 1906 when the



Aga Khan and his deputationists waited on Lord Minto, as well as in the emphasis with which it demands the earliest abolition of that "curse of Indian politics" in favour of a joint electorates system. We have realized after the experience of 40 years that the only party that has derived advantages out of initiating this system is the Britishers themselves, by reason of the divisions and fissures introduced in the body politic of India so much as to convert even a Nationalist Jinnah into a Separationist Pakistani. Indeed, of all the tragedies of Indian politics, there has been no tragedy greater than the tragedy of Mohamed Ali Jinnah.

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The publication of the Sapru Report is timely because it will crystalize the mind of the waverers and Doubting Thomases, on the issue of division of India. It remains to be seen if even after the able exposition against Pakistan the Jinnah-ites will have the courage to press it on the floor of the Central Assembly. If they do, the attitude of the Congress is clear: To promptly deny it and bury it. The Sapru Committee, while condemning Pakistan as having been the result of asking the British Government to give their awards, has suggested that, "in the event of our proposals proving unacceptable to the different parties, we call upon His Majesty's Government to set up an interim government and proceed to establish a suitable machinery for framing a new constitution substantially on the principles enunciated by us."



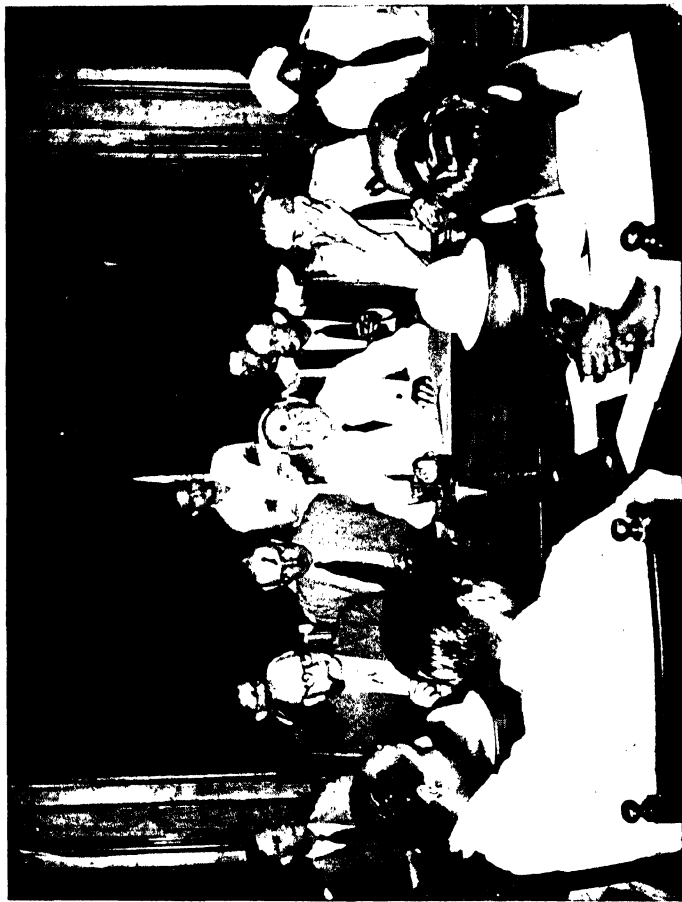


Gandhiji, Cripps, and the Author in March 1942 when the news was  
smelt and splashed



Sir Stafford Cripps on arrival as Member, British Cabinet Delegation, in 1946





A view of the Press Conference held by the Cabinet Mission on May 17, 1946. Seated at the table, facing the camera are, left to right : Mr A. V. Alexander, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, and Sir Stafford Cripps. Mr A. S. Jeyengar is seated to the left of Sir Stafford, and Mr A. H. Jeyce to the right of Lord Pethick-Lawrence



Lord Mountbatten addressing a Press Conference on the Constitutional Plan of Britain parting with power but agreeing to the division of India, held on July 4, 1947. Sardar Patel presided over the Conference arranged by the Author



Sardar Patel as Information Minister, with Pressmen





Arrival of H. E. Shri C. Rajagopalachariar, Governor-General designate, in Delhi on  
June 20, 1948



Introducing Press representatives to H. E. Shri C. Rajagopalachariar



A crowd of Pressmen waiting at Faletti's Hotel to receive Pandit Govind Valabh Pant who was conducting negotiations from the side of the Congress with Mr. Jinnah in 1945 summer



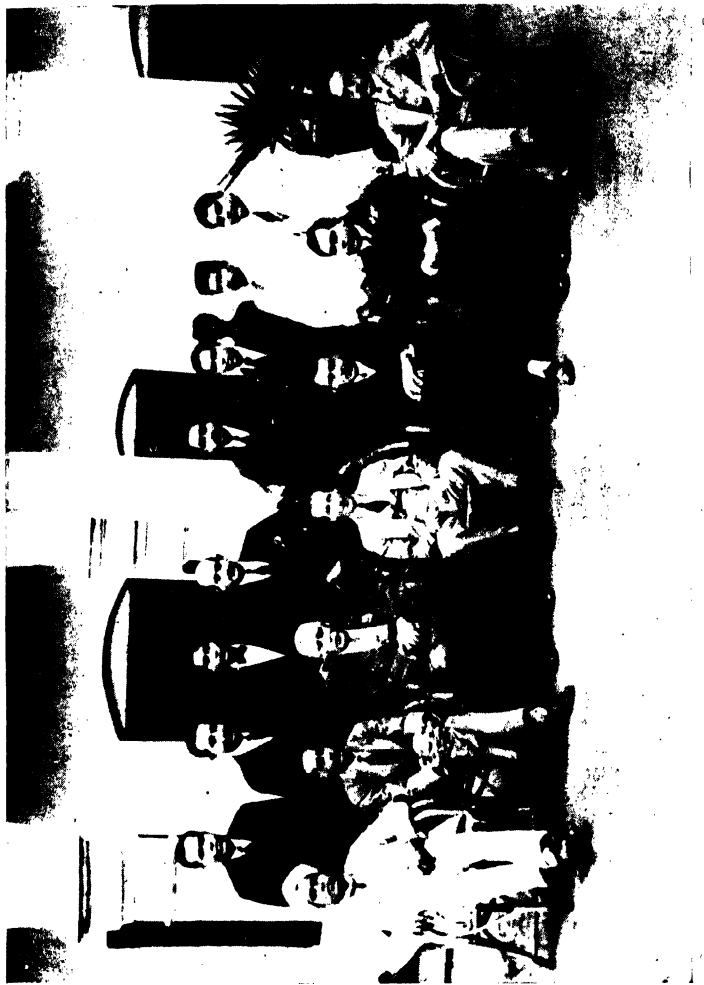
The famous Press Conference held by Mr Jimmah in Simla at the time of the Wavell Conference when the League leader explained why he claimed for the Muslims equal representation with the Hindus but refused to answer a single question and made a bee-line for his room



First Press Gallery Committee of the Indian Parliament constituted when Sir Shammukham Chetty was the Speaker. Sir Shammukham is seated in the centre and to his right are Sir



Mr Eamonn De Valera, former Premier of Eire in 1948, snapped at the Palam Aerodrome and introduced to Pressmen



Chairman of Reuters Ltd., Sir Roderick Jones, in India in 1924. Sir Roderick Jones is seated at the centre and to his right in order are Sir Edward Buck (Reuters's Representative with the Govt. of India), Mr K. C. Roy (Founder and Director of the Associated Press) and Mr A. S. Iyengar (Editor), while to Sir Roderick's left are



Group photo on the occasion of the visit of legislators from Delhi to the N.W. F. Province in 1925. Pandit Motilal Nehru is to the right of Sir Nornnan Bolton, Chief Commissioner and Sir Abdul Qayum to his left.  
The author and Mr Arthur Moore are standing behind them





Informal atmosphere of Pressmen at the Press Camp at Burj in Simla  
during the abortive Wavell Conference



Author at the Tea Party given in his honour by Mr S. A. Jawad, P. I. O. of Pakistan Government at Karachi in January 1960.

## **PART V**



## 1. HOW I BECAME P. I. O.

Early in February 1946, Sir Akbar Hydari, Member for Information in the Government of India, called me aside at a social function in New Delhi and enquired if I would accept the post of Principal Information Officer. He briefly told me why Pothan Joseph's services were being terminated and mentioned that Lord Wavell would be particularly pleased if I would accept the offer. I hesitated and promised to think it over. I spent a disturbed night. My mind was tossed ; and when I examined the pros and cons, I found that the cons had the better of it. My professional income at the time was Rs. 400 more than the salary attached to the post of Principal Information Officer. Hence even on financial grounds I was not keen about accepting the offer. On personal grounds I hesitated, because though I had numerous friends in the Government of India at almost every rung of the Secretariat, I had been considered a critic of the British Government's policy on the political plane. In fact I expressed my doubt if Lord Wavell would be pleased at my becoming the Principal Information Officer. I was assured that it was Lord Wavell himself who was enthusiastic about it. Still I hesitated and in fact delayed or, may I say, evaded the issue for three days. Sir Akbar Hydari himself then rang me up asking me to meet him in his office room in the Council House. With his usual friendliness he spoke in the sincerest of tones: "I shall meet Archie [Sir Archibald Rowlands] the Finance Member and see if he could raise the figure of the salary so far attached to the post. But what I feel is that you should accept the post because it will be a fitting culmination to your long and distinguished career in the field of journalism." I enquired if any one else had been consulted, to which pat came the reply: "Wavell wants you. He seems to have watched your journalistic contributions rather closely. I think you will do well to accept the offer."

I promised to give my reply after hearing what the Finance Member would say. In fact, there was an exchange of correspondence between Sir Akbar Hydari and Sir Archibald Rowlands. The Finance Department pointed out that the post carried a fixed salary which could not be altered without disturbing the pay structure. Sir Archibald therefore wrote rather apologetically to Sir Akbar. By this time the news had spread among journalists in Delhi, who indeed expected that there would be no delay in my accepting the offer. At this stage I received a hint from a well-informed friendly quarter that political changes were to take place very shortly and that an announcement towards that end was in the offing. As I had never doubted the veracity of this source, I took the plunge and said 'Yes' to the offer from Government but desiring the contract to be limited to three years. I had seen the Government of India without an Information Bureau. I had seen the Bureau from its beginnings in 1921 with only one Director and two stenographers when the principal work of the Director was the preparation of the report on the moral and material progress of India, while the day-to-day publicity was done by the news agency of which I was an editor at the headquarters of the Government of India. I had also seen the expansion of the Bureau as a result of the visit of Mr Joyce from the India Office in 1937, shortly after Mr Hennessy had become the Principal Information Officer. I had also watched the growth of the Bureau during the war years of 1939-45. There was therefore nothing new of which I should be afraid.

Above all, a remarkable thing happened which looked auspicious. A forty-day prayer conducted in my house for another purpose was coming to an end and I participated in it for one hour. As soon as I emerged and came to my study I found a sealed envelope on my table which, on opening, contained a letter from the Information Department formally offering the post of P.I.O. on the salary of

Rs. 2,250. I found that the hand of providence was behind this coincidence and made up my mind to accept it. I accordingly accepted the offer and two days later, on the 16th of February 1946, I went over and saw Mr Bozman, the Secretary, before I assumed charge.

## 2. GOVT. BECOMES "INDIAN AND NATIONAL"

I am not much of a believer in astrology, but there were occasions on which I had the pleasant experience of seeing certain astrological predictions in my case come true. An astrologer from Malabar had predicted in 1918 that I would be crossing the seas in 1932. And accordingly I travelled by sea to Europe and Britain. Ten years later in August 1942 an astrologer from Bangalore, staying in Delhi, gave to me in writing what I was completely incredulous of at the time—that "the Government of India would make use of your services and that it would be a National Government, and not the Imperial Government". What happened was that the British Government through Lord Wavell appointed me in February 1946 and just three days after, there began the series of developments which came in the form of announcements, followed by missions, negotiations, decisions, changes—all resulting in the establishment, within six months, of a National Government with Pandit Nehru as the Prime Minister and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as the Minister for Home Affairs and States and also as my boss in the Ministry of Information.

Perhaps a brief re-capitulation of political events is justified at this stage if only to indicate what these six months were and what they meant for me as P.I.O. Developments, welcome and otherwise, followed in quick succession—welcome politically but unwelcome communally.

The announcement of the despatch of the Cabinet Mission under Lord Pethick-Lawrence with Sir Stafford Cripps

and Mr A. V. Alexander was made on the 19th February from London ; the Mission arrived in Delhi on the 24th of March. The very next day there was a big Press Conference (the first of a series that I arranged for the Mission collectively and sometimes individually), there was a procession of political as well as communal leaders from all over India who had interviews with the Mission for a number of days in April, before the Cabinet Mission issued their statement of the 16th of May. There was an exposition of that statement by Sir Stafford Cripps and a broadcast by the Secretary of State, followed by one broadcast by Lord Wavell and another by the Commander-in-Chief. The Princes were getting perturbed and there was published a memorandum by the Mission on the question of treaties with Indian States with particular reference to the question of Paramountcy. The Congress and the League deliberated separately for the greater part of May. Indeed, the Congress Working Committee was in continuous session, the principal leaders like Pandit Nehru visiting Government House this minute, Birla House the next, the Harijan Colony the third, reporting the various developments in a ceaseless effort to arrive at a solution of the political and constitutional problems of India. Mahatma Gandhi was staying in the Harijan Colony at New Delhi, his evening prayers being attended by increasing numbers of people as his post-prayer speeches were invariably the only correct clue to the trend of the delicate negotiations that were in progress between the Congress leaders and the Cabinet Mission on the one hand and the reactions which these provoked in the League camp on the other. So far as Muslims were concerned, the Cabinet Mission stated, after a review of the voluminous evidence submitted to them, that there was almost universal desire, outside the supporters of the Muslim League, for the Unity of India. But in the League camp it was not what the rank and file or even what the lieutenants of Mr Jinnah thought but what



the Qaide-Azam felt there must be. So besides the Birla House and the Harijan Colony, there was 10, Aurangzeb Road to reckon with in all the negotiations and to be visited by the Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru, besides, of course, by the members of the Cabinet Delegation. Another month passed in correspondence on the grouping of Provinces and formation of an Interim Government on a suggested basis of parity with the Muslim League, which the Congress under the presidentship of Maulana Azad had to reject on the ground of its 'unfairness' not only to the Congress, but also to smaller minorities. Efforts to bring about an agreed basis for the formation of an Interim Government having failed, the Viceroy and the Cabinet Delegation issued a statement on June 16th in which they set forth a proposal for the establishment of an Interim Government as preliminary to the setting up of a National Government and of a Constituent Assembly for India. But that master tactician, Mr Jinnah, upset each time the plans of both the Congress and the British Government until, eventually, he got his Pakistan and the Congress accepted the inevitable—the division of India into two "nations". The Cabinet Mission left India at the end of June, after 95 days of hard work in which every one had put forth his physical as well as intellectual best—the Cabinet Mission and their office, Lord Wavell and his Secretariat, the Congress leaders with their Working Committee, the Muslim Leaguers with their links—not to speak of the numerous other parties and leaders who had been coming in and out. Indeed, Delhi was, in those days, the Mecca of politicians, and not a day passed without statements from one or other of these numerous leaders or their organizations. As soon as the Cabinet Delegation left, the political organizations met separately and gave their verdicts, while in the British Parliament, a few days later, there was a debate on the work of the Cabinet Mission. August 1946, however,

broke fresh ground, with the Congress accepting in entirety the scheme formulated by the Cabinet Mission while the League rejected it. The British Government then varied their tactics and issued an invitation to Pandit Nehru to form a Government followed by the announcement on the 24th August of its actual composition.

To me, therefore, the 24th August 1946 was a memorable day. I take liberty to quote the following from my diary of that date : "For three decades I have watched the progress of national thought, recorded almost daily, if not hourly, the doings of national organizations, followed the currents of affairs in their national as well as international settings, met the leaders in highways and byways, and observed their characteristics. Today, the topmost men among them, barring Gandhiji, have agreed to enter the Government, preparatory to the Constituent Assembly. It is some satisfaction therefore to me early in my Government career to see the national leaders rising to their full stature by agreeing to serve the people from inside the Government.

" The news was to be announced today. The exact hour was not fixed even till 10 in the morning. I was promised the communique at 3 o'clock, and I therefore fixed 3-30 for handing it over to press correspondents. At 12 noon I sent round the circular. Exactly at 3 p.m. several correspondents trooped into the Press Information Bureau. I was then at the Viceroy's House. It was an important hour, from my point of view as head of the Bureau, for news supply to the pressmen in India. At the Viceroy's House Abell showed me the text of the broadcast to be delivered by the Viceroy and asked for my reaction. He agreed with my analysis and appeared to appreciate it. Then at 3-25, with the announcement in hand, I returned to the Bureau. The pressmen were waiting. At 3-30 it was distributed. It was a pleasurable sensation: it had fallen to me, as a humble instrument of God, to discharge a duty to the public through

the press by having to supply a piece of news that summed up the achievement of the Congress in its 60 years' career of which 30 years I had watched personally.

"All are known to me in the new Government except Bhabha. It is a pity that the League is not in it, but the Viceroy's appeal was straight and emphatic. I therefore expect the League will walk in, not long after. Moreover, *Dawn* editorial is not altogether disheartening. The *Statesman* editorial also aimed at bringing in the Leaguers. The Viceroy's visit to Calcutta on the 25th August may lead to a correct assessment of the League's affairs in the League-governed province of Bengal, particularly after the great holocaust. The Leaguers cannot be excluded for long even though there may be delay. Therefore, an interim Coalition Government is almost a certainty."

Pandit Nehru and his colleagues took their oath of office on the morning of 2nd September 1946 at Government House. It was a brief ceremony, but practically all the correspondents and cameramen came to the Quadrangular to see the Congress leaders emerge smiling, as Ministers. The same evening Pandit Nehru accompanied by his colleagues, held a press conference in that historic hall where the Cabinet Mission had held Press Conferences. It was largely attended. In his inimitably simple style he declared: "We cannot function even for the good of the people without the goodwill of the people. If we of the Congress are today co-operating with those whom we have opposed all along in the Government, much more inevitably do we seek the co-operation of every Indian."

Seven weeks, and for seven weeks only, did they function as a composite Government on the basis of joint responsibility under Lord Wavell's chairmanship. Meetings were held daily and even decisions were made over the launching of

great power and irrigation projects. The practice of periodical interviews of Secretaries of Government with the Governor-General was dispensed with. It was interesting for me to watch the reactions in Government House on the work of the Interim Government under Pandit Nehru's leadership. That was the one place where political reactions in the country had their seismic effect and decisions were taken to shape things according to a certain definite policy. Pandit Nehru and his colleagues were to form an Interim Government leaving out the Muslim Leaguers, because they were proving obstinate, obstructive and obstreperous. Though the Leaguers were not represented two prominent Muslims, Dr Shaffaat Ahmad Khan and Syed Ali Zaheer had been taken and were functioning whole-heartedly and with great ability—despite the ridicule poured upon them—in the hope that the communal and personal antagonisms would abate. But Dr Shaffaat Ahmad in particular was mercilessly criticized in the columns of *Dawn*, the Muslim League organ in Delhi, until, a few weeks later, he was assassinated in Simla. While the Interim National Government was functioning as a corporate whole as a Cabinet and as part of a larger scheme which envisaged a Constituent Assembly, Mr Jinnah, his lieutenants and his newspapers were busy castigating the British Government and charging them with duplicity. And Calcutta witnessed the "Great Killing" in observance of Direct Action Day as staged by the Muslim League. Those few weeks of Interim Government, therefore, gave a jolt to Mr Jinnah and his Leaguers. Mr Jinnah himself was summoned to Delhi and he had three talks with Lord Wavell. He did not meet Mahatma Gandhi. The people began to entertain doubts as much about the intentions of the British Government as of the League. But Gandhiji, the shrewdest observer, took the public into confidence in one of his post-prayer speeches when he said: "Independence is coming to India whether there is agreement between the

Congress and the League or not. No one can stop it. India has bled enough for it."

### 3. LEAGUERS ENTER AND SABOTAGE

Pandit Nehru had, on the eve of taking office, announced that the door was always open for Leaguers to enter, but Mr Jinnah replied saying that his Leaguers could not co-operate and that only skilled diplomacy could avert a civil war. What that "skilled diplomacy" was he later announced as a declaration in favour of Pakistan. In this context, the All-India Congress Committee ratified the decision of the Working Committee to join the Interim Government. The Muslim League immediately reversed its previous attitude and decided to join the Interim Government. Gandhiji remarked: "The tactics of the League have not been straight." Indeed, Mr Ghaznafar Ali Khan, who had been announced as a member of the Coalition Government went to the extent of declaring that the decision of the League to join the Interim Government was only to create a foothold to fight for Pakistan. Still Pandit Nehru, in his correspondence with Mr Jinnah, showed his main concern as being the continuance of the Cabinet rule without the intervention of the Governor-General. But Mr Jinnah's Deputy, Mr Liaqat Ali, declared that the League leaders in the Interim Government would view every question from the communal angle and fight tooth and nail for Muslim interests. It was plain that Liaqat Ali was the authoritative leader of the Muslim section in the Coalition Government. The Leaguers were sworn in as Ministers at Government House at 10 o'clock on the morning of 26th October with the same ceremony that the Congressmen had observed seven weeks before. As soon as they came out of the Cabinet Room, Mr Liaqat Ali Khan asked me to arrange a Press Conference at 5 p.m. the same day. I

consulted Pandit Nehru, who was having a brief conversation with Sardar Patel. He paused for a few seconds and said: "If he wants it, let him have it." And so, a Press Conference was arranged. It was attended by other members of the League in the newly formed Cabinet. Almost the first thing announced by Mr Liaqat Ali was that the Interim Government consisted of two blocs, one of the Congress and the other of the League, each functioning under separate leadership! Pandit Nehru was forced to abandon his hope of working with the Leaguers on the principle of joint responsibility. His separate meetings with members of the so-called Cabinet had to be suspended as they were not being attended by the Leaguers. The 'Cabinet' was cut into two. A kind of diarchy, which was reminiscent of the impracticable innovation of the early years of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms was shaping itself in Delhi at a time when the country was on the verge of famine—food was scarce, clothing more than ever inadequate, and the country's crying need was peace and more production. The League decided also to boycott the Constituent Assembly, which was the essential part of the long-term plan accepted by the Congress. And Mr Jinnah in a speech at Karachi went further and advocated exchange of population as a solution to the communal trouble. But no immediate decision was possible. The situation required further consideration both in India and in Britain. Mahatma Gandhi with his inimitable faith betook himself to East Bengal where the communal fire was raging. He quelled it with village-to-village and indeed house-to-house visits in the affected areas. But Noakhali was followed by the conflagration in Bihar and Gandhiji had to turn his attention to this province in the beginning of March 1947. Meanwhile, Mr Liaqat Ali Khan as Finance Minister of the Interim Government had introduced his budget which was claimed by some as a Socialist budget, two features of which were the abolition of the salt

tax, and the decision to investigate the private accumulation of wealth made during the war years.

The British Government summoned Lord Wavell to London for talks, and also Pandit Nehru and Mr Jinnah. The result was an announcement from London that the unwilling parts of India would not be coerced to join the Constituent Assembly. The communal frenzy in Bengal and Bihar was followed by similar events in the Punjab and in the North-West Frontier Province where clashes occurred almost daily, emphasizing the political incompatibility of the two communities in those parts of India. Following these demonstrations the British Government announced in February 1947 their decision to quit by June 1948. And the Congress Working Committee in order to test the Muslim attitude declared firmly that if India was to be partitioned, the Punjab would have to be partitioned first. On June 3rd the British Government suggested separate voting for separate Constituent Assemblies. Lord Wavell left India in March and was succeeded by Lord Mountbatten, Victoria's great-grand-son. It was Mahatma Gandhi who first announced at one of his prayer meetings that Lord Mountbatten had told him that he would be the last of the British rulers, in keeping with the "Quit India" resolution of the Congress. Lord Mountbatten invited the members of the Standing Committee of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, then in session in New Delhi, to a social gathering at Government House. Addressing the Editors, he described the partition of India as "the most crazy thing from top to bottom". Of course, editors of Muslim League sympathies were not present at the time, for they had formed a separate organization of their own which assembled once in Delhi only to declare that they would work for Pakistan. However, the last of the British Viceroys expedited the process of division of India by introducing a special calendar and seeing to it that the Partition Secretariat worked according to it. Instead

therefore, of June 1948 being the month for transfer of power it was announced that 15th of August 1947 was the Appointed Day. On this date Lord Mountbatten ceased to be the Viceroy and the Crown Representative, and, on the motion of India's Constituent Assembly, was appointed Governor-General—a post to which he was welcomed with much acclaim and affection and amid cries of "Mountbatten ki Jai". The masses greeted him with almost as much enthusiasm as they did their own leaders. The scenes of splendour and glory in which he bade India good-bye ten months later in June 1948 are fresh in our memory, as also the quiet dignity and self-confidence with which Mr C. Rajagopalachariar assumed duties as the first Indian Governor-General.

I have given this brief account in retrospect in order to fill in some of the incidents connected with my career as Principal Information Officer during those three eventful years of India's transition from the purely bureaucratic foreign Government run by Britishers and controlled from Whitehall in London into a completely Indian National Government within a Secular State. In the normal course of events these three years would have meant for me but a transfer of publicity activities from the News Agency offices to the Secretariat in the Government of India. But, as it turned out, it was a period of the greatest strain physically and mentally, involving the longest hours of attendance in office, at the Secretariat, and at conferences and requiring not only alertness before the sly and the intelligent but enormous patience with fools.

#### 4. PUBLICITY FOR ALL

Publicity problems developed both in number and magnitude. Publicity was required for the British Cabinet



Mission which stayed for over three months, taxing the energies and the resources of the Bureau in Delhi and in the regional offices. Publicity was needed for the Interim National Government and later for the combined Coalition Government of the Congress and the League in which very delicate issues of personal character were involved, because while the one section thought of urgent constructive schemes the other was planning how to delay, if not sabotage, them. Publicity was necessary for the several Government measures intended to deal with communal savagery and other crimes committed in various parts of India from Noakhali in the east to Peshawar in the north-west, while Delhi, the Capital, was in the throes of a rebellion by the Muslims. Publicity was given for the very successful merger of over 550 Indian States into Unions or amalgamation with Provinces. Then, for months the Kashmir campaign demanded separate attention; and on top of all was Hyderabad which with its fabulous wealth and rebellious ways presented problems of publicity for Government requiring my personal attention day in and day out before, during, and even long after, the Police Action. Publicity of a detailed character was given to the Rehabilitation and Relief Ministry because lakhs of people, uprooted from their hearths and homes, were crowding into Delhi and elsewhere, wanting immediate redress of their manifold grievances. All along, publicity was required for such constructive programmes of Government as the Damodar Valley and other multi-purpose projects. Many-sided publicity was essential for the new Government expanding with Ministers, State Ministers and Deputy Ministers and also for the Asian Relations Conference, the ECAFE and the series of other international conferences held in India in quick succession. All this had to be done with the officer personnel of the Bureau reduced after the partition of India, with a rather tight budget and with rather frequent changes of Secretaries in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Sardar Patel

expressed his sympathy by visiting the Bureau twice, but before he could give effective help he fell ill for several months.

The functions of the P.I.O. are connected with the control and supervision of publicity and administration besides contacts with Ministers, Secretaries and other Officers. He has to watch the trends in the Press by close contacts with pressmen and various publicity organizations in the country and bring them to the notice of the Government. He has to supervise the work of the Information Officers attached to the various Ministries and by reason of his close contacts with Ministers or their Secretaries, guide the Information Officers in order to keep the public informed correctly of the policy and the doings of the Government of India and their numerous attached Offices spread over Delhi and other centres in the country. He has to see a number of callers belonging to the Press and from the public; and in respect of about 120 accredited correspondents representing the Press in India and of the world the information sought has to be given without delay. Normally, therefore, it is a post involving heavy strain, and in the exceptionally crowded political developments of the three years, my burden and responsibility became heavy and onerous. It was Sardar Patel who described the tempo of events in India as "One day is equal to a century". I can only thank God, who put me in that pivotal post during such a historic period, for having enabled me to pull through it without serious injury to my health and with so much goodwill of all concerned.

## 5. MEETING EDITORS AND ACCREDITING CORRESPONDENTS

The day I joined the Bureau, I flew to Allahabad with Sir Akbar Hydari, who was Member in charge of Information, to attend the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference.

Food was and has remained the biggest problem in the country and has been a prime topic in the Press Information Bureau as regards publicity. The imposition, abolition, and reintroduction of controls have required publicity in varying degrees, according to the varying situations in the country. I had connexions with the A. I. N. E. C. since its inception in 1941, and was an elected member of its Standing Committee and of the Central Press Advisory Committee, till I joined Government service. In the 'plane, as we were travelling, Sir Akbar discussed with me the publicity required for the food policy of Government. The discussion at the Allahabad Conference went off according to plan, the Editors requiring more prompt and up-to-date information. Accordingly, what may be called the 'Food Cell' which had been created in the Bureau was strengthened in order to co-ordinate Agriculture with it.

I had not been even 24 hours an official when I found myself in Allahabad, so to say, in the 'opposite camp' but the Editors who were assembled under the Presidentship of Mr Tushar Kanti Ghosh of the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* extended to me their welcome. Later in the same week, I found appreciative references in several newspapers regarding my appointment with the exception of *Dawn*, the organ of the Muslim League. The relationship which existed between the A. I. N. E. C. and myself was so cordial that to all its annual sessions and its meetings of the Standing Committee invitations were invariably extended to me. I availed of every opportunity of meeting the Editors, realizing their problems and apprising Government of them. One of the main questions thus disposed of was the principle underlying the accreditation of journalists as representatives of newspapers or news agencies functioning at the headquarters of the Government of India. This question hung fire for several months, but soon after the Cabinet Mission had dispersed, it was tackled with some resoluteness; the

draft rules prepared by Government were placed before the Standing Committee of the A. I. N. E. C. who made certain very appropriate changes and adopted them. Since then, the admission of journalists as accredited correspondents representing newspapers or news agencies, came to be regulated in accordance with those rules. The list is reviewed every half year by the P. I. O. in consultation with the Central Press Advisory Committee—a body set up by the Standing Committee of the A. I. N. E. C.—and its opinions are obtained before any decision is taken. The principal criteria laid down are that the newspaper in question must have sufficient circulation and influence ; secondly, the correspondent for whom accreditation is claimed must be a whole-time 'bona fide' journalist who must have put in at least 3 years in the profession. I am happy to record that the Central Press Advisory Committee extended to me their co-operation and assistance in the enforcement of the rules, though quite frequently there were cases involving issues like chain newspapers, which had to be tackled delicately and at the same time firmly. Only one correspondent was disqualified as a result of the application of these rules, but in the main the quality of accredited correspondents has improved considerably. A separate set of rules was prepared and enforced for foreign correspondents after much discussion in consultation with the Central Press Advisory Committee. The Foreign Correspondents' Association hesitated at first to have any rules in regard to their accreditation, for it was argued by them that the conditions of their service and the manner of their assignments left room for neither doubt nor delay in the matter of accreditation. Eventually the Foreign Correspondents' Association, when once the rules were adopted, were most happy to conform to them. No foreign correspondent has been kept out of the list as a result of the application of these rules. Some of them, however, left Delhi in the usual course of their

assignments like Mr Robert Simson of the B. B. C. and Mr Jose-  
lyn Hennessy, one of my predecessors in the Press Information  
Bureau, who afterwards represented the Kemsley group of  
newspapers and eventually, after India's attainment of  
Independence, found it more congenial to work in Clive Street  
in Calcutta. The rules in respect of Indian and Foreign  
correspondents were copied, I was told, by the Pakistan  
Government in Karachi. Not only the rules, but even the  
size and form of the accreditation card. When it was decided  
to have on this card the photograph of the correspondent  
affixed by way of help towards identification, Mr Hennessy  
wrote to me in his characteristic style what was meant to be  
a protest, but actually congratulating me on the decision.  
What part I could play in regard to compiling of information  
for the International Conference on Freedom of Information  
held at Geneva and how it was possible to help the growth  
of journalism on various occasions, are all confined to official  
records. Sometimes, press photographers and newsreel-  
men, as distinct from Press correspondents, presented baffling  
situations in which it was difficult to lay down hard and fast  
rules. It was particularly so after the American corres-  
pondents, who are good newsmen, came equipped with came-  
ras. No final solution was found possible, and though the  
pressmen as a whole have appreciated the difficulties of  
Government in such cases, there was some confusion as to  
what should or should not be done on occasions. One such  
was before the trial of Nathuram Godse and others  
over the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. My advice  
was against the Press being allowed to take photo-  
graphs, though the precedent existed of the trial of War-lords  
having been thrown open to photographers in Germany.  
But a section of newsreelmen approached other authorities  
towards a different decision, with the result that I insisted  
that if cameramen be allowed, there should be no discrimi-  
nation in favour of a few and that permission should be

given to all accredited cameramen. This was agreed to and as advised the Court gave permission to them to take photographs or newsreels, for 10 minutes before the proceedings began. Even this limited and cautious permission accorded to photographers was considered by one or two critics in the Parliament as a piece of doubtful wisdom, and it remains to be seen whether a perfectly agreeable solution could be found.

## 6. PUBLICITY FOR CABINET DELEGATION

As stated in an earlier chapter, the Cabinet Delegation visited India towards the end of March 1946, in the wake of the Goodwill Mission that had been sent earlier by Britain. It was a hot afternoon: the sun was beating fiercely upon the members of the Delegation as they alighted at Palam. Sir Stafford Cripps waved to me, which encouraged me to proceed towards him and request him and his colleagues to come to the 'Shamiana' where the pressmen were awaiting them. As we were walking along, Chamanlal, formerly of the *Hindustan Times*, informed Sir Stafford that I had become P. I. O. of the Government of India. Thereupon Sir Stafford exclaimed: "That is good news. So the Noble Lord has done the trick. Yours is a case of poacher turned game keeper." These remarks were published in the newspapers along with the photographs of Sir Stafford Cripps and myself going towards the Press 'Shamiana'. As soon as Sir Stafford rejoined Lord Pethick-Lawrence, he informed him of my transformation from the unofficial to the official sphere and added: "Our mission is bound to succeed."

The next day—24th March 1946—there was a very largely attended Press Conference by the Cabinet Delegation. The earnestness with which Lord Pethick-Lawrence spoke was unmistakable. Being the first conference, every word of

what he said—and his statements were supplemented by Sir Stafford Cripps—was followed by the numerous journalists present, with every desire to help towards a solution. Only the Muslim League section of pressmen could be heard murmuring in order to give the impression that whatever the Cabinet Delegation might say or do would not be acceptable to the League in entirety. The expression 'minority' was explained by Lord Pethick-Lawrence in a manner which gave them a sphere of influence that could not be ignored. The reference was, of course, to the Muslims, and to none other. The *Daily Herald* Special Correspondent in Delhi observed in his message: "I am told, on the best authority, that what the Secretary of State meant was that the Muslims could not be regarded as a minority in the same light as the Sikhs or the Indian Christians were." The same day the *Daily Express* Special Correspondent from Delhi wrote: "In neither Punjab, Assam, nor in the North-West Frontier has the Muslim League been able to form a Government. Still Jinnah says, 'Give me Pakistan,' or we Muslims will fight." Though Lord Pethick-Lawrence's head was shaking due to age, his voice was clear and his words were emphatic. There was in him more of the statesman, and less of the lawyer.

The publicity for the Cabinet Delegation was in charge of Mr A. H. Joyce who had come as P. I. O. with the Delegation.

The methods employed by Joyce for imparting information varied according to each person. His exclusive talks with the foreign correspondents provoked complaints from the Indian correspondents. It was then arranged that all the questions of correspondents be pooled and the answers released simultaneously by Joyce and myself. This arrangement afforded no satisfaction. Joyce then decided to hold a Press Conference. I pointed out the inadvisability of the Delegation's P. I. O. holding a Press Conference when the

Delegation was to launch on a very delicate task and was yet to ascertain the attitude of the various parties in the country. He first thought that I was not helpful and insisted on having a conference. And so the conference was arranged. But within 5 minutes of the start when questions were shot at him from all corners by senior correspondents, Joyce suffered much embarrassment. He was asked whether the Interim Government should be formed with the support of the main parties or have full popular support or should command the greatest possible support. He was asked whether the emphasis on the 'support of the main parties' did not place a veto in the hands of a minority. Joyce was unable to answer. Secondly, when a correspondent asked whether Muslims were a minority, Joyce had no answer. Thirdly, when asked whether the Constitution-making body would be a sovereign body, Joyce had again no answer. It was clear that these and other points raised could be answered only by the Cabinet Delegation. The reactions provoked by his elucidations of the Cabinet Delegation's statements were distinctly unhappy and proved a handicap even to the members of the Delegation. Several sections of the Indian Press, including the *Hindu* in Madras and the *Hindustan Times* in Delhi, were severely critical of Joyce having ventured to assume the role of a Cabinet Minister, and thereby created difficulties for the Cabinet Delegation themselves. These comments had of course been observed by the Delegation ; and one afternoon at the Bhangi Colony where I had gone to hear Mahatma Gandhi at the prayer meeting, I met Sir Stafford Cripps. He asked for my reaction to Joyce's Press Conference. I explained what had happened and at my suggestion he agreed to hold a conference himself to clear the position. At this conference held the next day, Sir Stafford was asked the following questions :

**Q :** Mr Joyce was good enough to give us a very valu-



able piece of information the other day saying that the starting point of these negotiations would be Lord Wavell's September Declaration, but the statement made by the Secretary of State and yourself said that you do not start from any scheme.

A : I think Mr Joyce was referring to historical facts and not to opinions or states of mind.

Q : He definitely said . . . . .

A : I am not going to interpret what other people said.

Q : But he definitely said that the starting point of these negotiations would be the September Declaration.

A : I do not know whether he did say it ; if he did, apart from the historical point of view, I think he would be wrong.

Towards the end of the conference, Altaf Hussain, Editor of *Dawn* asked : "What is your attitude today with regard to the pledge given to minorities in India by Lord Linlithgow in August 1940, according to which the minorities would not be coerced to submit to the authority of a Government they did not recognize ?"

Sir Stafford replied : "As in everything else, the importance of minorities, their position and their influence may well have changed in the last five or six years, and that may change the application of any such statement that was made in the past. We really want to start this thing on a fresh basis. If we start going back to interpret everything that has been said from Queen Victoria down to today, I think we will get into an awful muddle. The best way to approach is : We want to give independence to India as quickly and smoothly as we can. Let us sit down together and see how we can arrange it, rather than try to analyse past statements, some of which, indeed, might be found to be contradictory if they were fully analysed."

Finally, Sir Stafford was asked :

Q : Are you going to write on a clean slate ?

A : I hope so.

**Q :** You do not want to go back on promises ?

**A :** Nobody wants to go back on promises given.

The misapprehension was cleared and the Press reacted favourably to the statements of Sir Stafford Cripps.

I used to meet Lord Pethick-Lawrence and Sir Stafford Cripps more often than I did Mr Alexander, who appeared to be merely observing the doings of his colleagues. It will be remembered that he uttered not a word in India. Only in the British Parliament, after his return when he had to defend the work of the Delegation, did he say anything. During his stay here, he went off to visit Ceylon and the defence positions there. His presence was very little noticed by the Press in India, though he kept in touch with all the activities of his colleagues.

A few days later, when I was seeing Mr Abell, Private Secretary to Lord Wavell, he hailed me with—"I was looking for you. I have something to tell you." Instantly he went over to see Lord Wavell but took more than half an hour to come back. I was wondering what he was going to tell me. Actually, when he came back he smiled and said: "Do you know?—you were discussed last night at dinner. Cripps told H. E. [Lord Wavell] that while he is happy that you are the P. I. O. assisting the Cabinet Delegation, he is sorry to miss you in the Press camp. Cripps told him how in 1942 he enjoyed your cross-examining him at several conferences and used to like you. H. E. smiled all the time."

Several other Press Conferences were held by Lord Pethick-Lawrence and Sir Stafford Cripps during their stay. That of the 17th May 1946 following the statement by the Delegation, centred its discussion on the right of the Provinces to opt out of the Groups. On the question of Paramountcy Lord Pethick-Lawrence stated clearly: "Paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown, nor transferred to

the new Government. But the States have assured us that they are ready and willing to co-operate in the development of New India." Finally, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, when faced with questions which expressed doubts as to the strength of the Labour Party in Parliament to carry its policy against stalwart Conservatives like Churchill, rounded off with the assurance: "I do not contemplate any difficulty as the present Labour Government have a considerable working majority. I can only say that what we are doing is in accord with the views expressed all through by really great statesmen in our country, and nothing can redound more to the highest traditions of liberty which prevail in my country than if, as a result of our labours, we have, in the years to come, a sovereign country here in India whose relation with ours is one of friendliness and equality."

The Cabinet Delegation did not leave India till the 29th of June, *i.e.* a month and a half later. This period was one of anxiety because of the interminable correspondence that was going on between Maulana Azad as Congress President and Mr Jinnah as President of the Muslim League. There were days when it was feared that negotiations might break down. It was at this stage that Sir Stafford Cripps physically broke down and was confined to bed for a few days. There was gloom everywhere, but Mahatma Gandhi would not allow any pessimism over the outcome of the Delegation's work. When the *Hindustan Times* one evening announced the possibility of a breakdown, Mahatma Gandhi made special reference to it in his prayer-meeting speech, giving a homily to Editors and journalists to make sure of their facts before they made themselves responsible for statements suggesting a breakdown. That week I had to meet Sir Stafford Cripps at tea time in the residence of Lord Pethick-Lawrence. There I noticed on a small table only two papers—the airmail edition of the *London Times* and a copy of *Harijan* placed side by side. The significance of it struck me sufficiently

to say: "From the union between England's national paper and Gandhi's, there is no reason to doubt the result of the Mission." Lord Pethick-Lawrence remarked: "That is a shrewd observation."

On the eve of their departure, Lord Pethick-Lawrence as Chairman of the Delegation, gave a party to meet the secretariat of the Delegation and those officers of the Government of India who had helped the Delegation. B. L. Sharma and I represented the Bureau. Sir Stafford Cripps greeted me saying: "Well, my friend, poacher turned game-keeper—both proved and approved." My embarrassment allowed me only to murmur "Thanks".

On the 29th June, the Delegation took off from Willingdon Airport. There was a large gathering of pressmen; and when a representative of the *Hindustan Times* approached Cripps for a message, he declined to give any. When I spoke to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, he had a hurried consultation with the Lord Privy Seal and gave a happily worded message in farewell, which was given full publicity.

## 7. INTERVIEWS WITH VICEROYS

Since 1919 I have had the privilege of interviewing all the Viceroys. Lord Chelmsford used to preside over the Imperial Legislative Council in those days when Pandit Malaviya harangued against the Rowlatt Bill and later, after Jallianwalla Bagh, against the Indemnity Bill. It was only when he got tired of the long orations of Banerjees and Malaviyas that Chelmsford used to retire in favour of his Deputy, Sir George Lowndes, in addressing whom as Vice-President, Pandit Malaviya was often heard to lay stress on the word 'Vice'. Lord Chelmsford was the personification of authority. His name, however, was associated with the Montagu Declaration which initiated the absorption of

Indians in the Administration. Lord Reading believed efficiency was a quality to be found only among Britishers. He was therefore extremely cautious in implementing this principle despite the pleas of co-operators and the indirect pressure of non-co-operators. He loved pomp and pageantry. On appeals against capital punishment, he wrote with skill and keenness bringing to bear on each file an amount of study and knowledge of law which were worthy of the ex-Chief Justice of England. Lord Irwin (now known as Lord Halifax) was a pious Christian, dutiful, and with intense faith in conservatism as the bedrock of British rule in the Empire. But when accosted by a politico-humanist like Mahatma Gandhi, he was prepared to come to terms with him. Hence the famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

I appeared before Lord Halifax as member of a deputation, in my capacity as Secretary of the Upper India Journalists' Association, in the summer of 1930, following the Emergency Press Ordinance promulgated by his Government to control the Press in order to check the Civil Disobedience movement. Mr A. Rangaswami Iyengar, Editor of the *Hindu*, Madras and President of the All-India Journalists' Conference, led the deputation which included Sir C. Y. Chintamani, Mr Tushar Kanti Ghosh and Mr Durga Das. The discussion on the memorandum submitted lasted an hour, but Mr Rangaswami Iyengar's analysis of the Ordinance and Sir C. Y. Chintamani's convincing eloquence moved Lord Halifax into saying: "I stand here between a movement which is a real menace to the whole future and progress of India and the British Nation which is ignorant, puzzled and vexed over Indian affairs. I am looking forward to explaining my position in my address to the Central Legislature. But as Viceroy I am bound to assert the law against the disobedience of law, and I trust that the responsible Press whom you represent will help the administration in every way possible in explaining to the people the difficulties

and the intentions of the Government."

I have quoted from the notes I kept of the deputation. I intervened in the proceedings in order to expose the manner in which censorship was being exercised in those days. I pointed out in particular that censorship was so efficient that even Government communiques were delayed in transmission for three or four days! Mr Rangaswami Iyengar specifically mentioned the instance of the communique issued by the U. P. Government ordering a special enquiry into the Lucknow affairs. Lord Halifax was distinctly worried and Sir Harry Haig told me a few days later that he had issued instructions to prevent such foolish administration of censorship rules. Though the Press had suffered under the Ordinance, the administration of it was tempered with some discretion.

Speaking of censorship, I am reminded how 11 years later, when the War was on, the system of Press advising was introduced in order to censor messages and statements issued by leaders before publication in newspapers. Two or three important statements issued by Mahatma Gandhi were not passed for publication. He came out with a thundering admonition both to the Press and to the Government. To the Press he said: "Editors can signify their disapproval of the gag by either publishing the offending statements and risking prosecution or even confiscation of the press or by stopping the publication of their papers altogether by way of protest. It is open to the Editors to criticize and condemn the movement or the statements that may be issued." To the Government he said: "In a subject country like India, the liberty of the Press is doubly precious. It is false and cruel to suggest that I could have anything in common with Nazism or Fascism because I happen to oppose Imperialism." All this admonition led the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference to put its house in order and take a stand which

the Government had perforce to recognize as just and fair and to introduce the consultative machinery called the Standing Committee which in turn worked through the Central Press Advisory Committee in Delhi and through similar bodies in the Provinces.

The next Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, brought in a new method ; those whom he liked, he backed up all through ; if he disliked anybody, he made it plain in his conversations. In other words, power was administered with partiality though in fairness to him it should be said his favours were bestowed on those who merited them. In politics he wooed the Liberals as much as he shunned Congressmen. The way he ridiculed Mahatma Gandhi in social circles of Delhi was particularly disgusting. The Congress Party in the Central Assembly was, therefore, no friend of Lord Willingdon's. He bolstered his diplomacy with personal friendships derived from his Governorship of Bombay and Madras. Even so he failed miserably. The Congress Party boycotted all social functions connected with his regime. He took this to heart, and when the Congress was in session at Lucknow under the presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his farewell speech from New Delhi he frankly bemoaned the policy of boycott practised by the largest political party in the country against the representative of the King.

Lord Linlithgow, whose term of office was the longest on record, also started by rallying the Moderates, of whom he invited no less than 52, to counteract Mahatmaji's hold over the masses and the 'back to the village' movement of the Congress. But he did not take long to discover that the country stood by the Congress and Gandhiji, and not by his 'noble 52'. Thereafter Lord Linlithgow plunged himself more and more deeply in work, sometimes writing long and laborious notes even on trivialities. At any rate, as a

nonofficial journalist I heard that one of his longest "notes" covered twelve foolscap pages and referred to the aboriginal tribesmen in the Andaman Islands, where convicts used to be transported from India ! His speeches also were ponderous and ineffective. The War came, and with it more work, and for him many-sided responsibilities. He had to suspend the plan of introducing Federation for which he had pleaded to the annoyance of Muslim Leaguers and devote himself to the war-effort. That he worked sometimes 16 hours a day, causing anxiety to his medical advisers who frequently suggested to Lady Linlithgow that he should be taken out on long drives at least on Sundays, was a matter of common knowledge. The more he worked on files during the latter years of his regime, the further did he remove himself from the human factor in politics. I am not sure that he liked having to expand his own Executive Council by including Sir Homi Mody, Mr Nalini Ranjan Sarkar and Mr Aney. The result was that as soon as Mahatma Gandhi launched on his 21 days' fast which he called 'capacity fast' and the country was passing through an emotional crisis leading to the resignation of these three members, Lord Linlithgow without a pretence of protest, so to say, showed them the door. Any concessions to Congressmen who had launched the 'Quit India' movement would, for him, have meant a victory for the Nazi powers. Lord Linlithgow refused to release political detenus, but he saw to it that they were treated well on the whole. He showed much concern over Gandhiji's fast, by arranging the issue of health bulletins three times a day. In some ways Lord Linlithgow was a true lieutenant of Mr Churchill. It seems now, in retrospect of all that happened since 1942, that Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India with the 'Take it or Leave it' mission in order to debunk him from the politics of Britain, and prevent his becoming a rival as Premier. It was also plain that Lord Linlithgow kept Mr Churchill informed of the day-to-day developments



of Cripps' negotiations with Indian political leaders. To what extent he played Mr Churchill's policy may be revealed if and when Mr Churchill refers to it in his War memoirs. In 1942, the tide was against the Anglo-Americans. Rommel was at the gates of Egypt ; the Germans were breaking through the Caucasus and the Japanese were on the borders of Assam. South-East Asia was in ferment, and Gandhiji described India as being in a maelstrom. But the British who had gone through 'Dunkirk' would not take the risk of trusting the national leaders of India in spite of Gandhiji's oral and written assertions. On the other hand, the British Government developed and continued propaganda against Gandhiji and the Congress. According to the revelations made by Mrs Sarojini Naidu at a Press Conference in Delhi, in answer to my questions, Mira Ben sent a special messenger to Mahatma Gandhi asking what should be the attitude of the Indian people if the Japanese came. And Gandhiji on 30th May dictated a letter to Mahadev Desai and gave the fullest instructions in the most uncompromising manner that there could be no trafficking with the Japanese. Mira Ben requested Gandhiji to send the question and the answer to the Viceroy as there was a lying campaign about Gandhiji at the time. Mrs Sarojini Naidu added: "The difference between the Congress and the League is a matter of vulgar fractions and they are not at all fundamental." It was not till after the War that the question of Pakistan emerged as a definite issue, when the British Government were anxious to redeem their pledge for the transfer of power. Mr Churchill's policy in 1942 was one of imperialistic exploitation of India and in the defence of British imperialism against 'Nazism'. So confident was he even in the winter of 1942, that he unhesitatingly declared that he would by no means preside over the dissolution of the British Empire. But so far as Lord Linlithgow was concerned, not only had India been bled white but Bengal stared him in the face with famine

and death.

Then came Wavell, not only a soldier, but a great statesman as well. Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad have repeatedly testified to it both as politicians and as Ministers. He was swift in thought and swifter in action. His speeches were the briefest, for he expressed in a couple of sentences what others would say in twenty. During the Cripps negotiations he displayed his fine radicalism by his readiness to serve as Commander-in-Chief under an Indian Defence Member. In fact, Lord Wavell would have built a name for himself on the Indian soil even as Allenby had earned on the Egyptian soil. But events took a different turn. Under instructions from London, he managed to bring about a conference of leaders at Simla in order to create a Coalition Government on the basis of parity between the Congress and the League. But he had to throw up the sponge because of the intransigence of Mr Jinnah who wanted parity between Muslims and non-Muslims. A strong believer in the political and geographical unity of India, Lord Wavell spoke often like an 'Akhand Hindustani', much to the chagrin of Mr Jinnah and his colleagues. Still, his Secretary and Deputy Private Secretary successfully negotiated, through Abdur Rab Nishtar, to bring the Leaguers into the Interim Government soon after Pandit Nehru consented to be Leader of the Interim National Government. But Jinnah had trained his Leaguers to create deadlocks and vociferate the two-nation theory. The relations between the two sections of the Coalition became so strained and the communal situation in the country deteriorated so badly that Lord Wavell was recalled. Before relinquishing the Viceroyalty on the 23rd March, 1947 he celebrated the wedding of his daughter which took place in Delhi.

## 8. THE POPULAR MOUNTBATTENS

Lord Mountbatten was the greatest Viceroy, not because of his devastating charm or even his graciousness and sagacity, but because he came with the aim of withdrawing British Rule from India. He came with goodwill not only on his lips but in his large and generous heart and left in India's memory a vast and permanent goodwill. His indefatigable wife and charming daughter were just as lovable as he. Mountbatten, in the role of extinguishing British authority and rule, gracefully glided into the position of a constitutional Governor-General. By his manners and deeds, he proved himself as good an Indian as any, squatting on the floor, and often talking in Hindustani. He was hailed everywhere with shouts of "Mountbattenji ki Jai", attracting as large crowds as any Indian leader. His memory for names and faces was most remarkable. Lord Mountbatten needed no Private Secretary to remind him of the names or to locate the faces of the thousands upon thousands whom he met during his regime as Viceroy, or as the Governor-General under the National Government of India. Clear and precise in thought and speech, he excelled in the art of public speaking. Shortly before his departure, addressing the Convocation of the Patna University, he laid much stress on the building of character with moral and intellectual honesty. "Develop wide open minds so that you can see both sides of any question and always the other person's point of view. Strive for a reputation of fairmindedness which is justified because you really are fairminded, so that when you come to make a decision, people will have confidence in it, and know it is honest. After that, you must have the moral courage to stand by that decision, even at a time when it might prove to be unpopular and cause you to be sneered at."

He displayed similar clarity of thought and directness of appeal at the Press Conference he held in June 1947, when

he explained the British Government's plan of parting with power. To whomsoever doubted the sincerity of the British Government in implementing the promise of withdrawal of power, he gave a categorical assurance mentioning the date. Whoever questioned as to the division of India was told that, it was the decision of the leaders on both sides with the agreement and co-operation of the Congress, though personally he did not believe in the partition even at that hour. He left no one in doubt as to the details of the plan and how it was to be executed. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel presided at this Press Conference rendering it lively by his witticisms.

No previous Governor-General had held any Press Conference. Soon after Sir Stafford Cripps visited India in 1942, when I gave Lord Linlithgow a description of the Cripps Conferences I suggested that His Excellency might occasionally hold Press Conferences too, as did President Roosevelt in America. To this Lord Linlithgow replied: "I wish I had the freedom of the President of America. Then I could hold Press Conferences in Cripps' style not only weekly but daily. As it is, I am the Viceroy of India and must carry out the British Government's policy."

I remember that it was the 5th July 1947, some time after he assumed charge as Governor-General, that the Mountbattens asked me to lunch. "There was an air of complete informality. Their talks were a tonic; the cordial informality of the occasion was characteristic of that charming couple. The conversation drifted to the subject of the India Bill. Mountbatten spoke of the unprecedented speed with which it had been drafted and how it tried to meet all eventualities. Its simplicity and directness could not be improved upon. It showed, according to Mountbatten, that there was nothing to hide, that what was decided upon would be followed and that the time-table could not be changed."—This is an extract from my diary.

Mountbatten spoke with confidence that everything

would go well and that for his part he was only anxious that no misunderstanding should exist as to the intentions of the British Government or the objective of the people of India. The word 'Independence' was deliberately used in the Bill because Dominion Status was virtually Independence and that Independence could be had through this Bill without much delay.

Referring to the Press, he said : "I believe the Press has behaved wonderfully and reacted to my activities in the most friendly manner. I consider myself lucky and hope I will continue to receive this encouragement in the future. My work will fail if the Press does not understand me. I am, therefore, looking to you for assistance in this respect."

Lady Mountbatten, speaking of the meetings of St. John Ambulance Association and the Red Cross Society, remarked : "These organizations used to be the monopoly of the wives of Governors, Chief Commissioners and the Viceroy. I am most anxious that we should have nothing to do with what should be completely non-official. They should be popular organizations."

When I reminded her of her visit to Gurgaon, she said : "I do not mind the inconvenience of a hot day, for my object was to put the refugees at ease and make them feel that we are not going to allow matters to drift. Human nature is the same everywhere and we have to approach the people in the proper spirit, if we are to serve them well. That is why I do not mind visiting any number of hospitals, nursing institutions, schools and suchlike."

Five days later, Lord Mountbatten invited a group of Indian Editors to an 'At Home' at Government House, at which he made one or two announcements. First, that by Attlee's statement in Parliament, Jinnah became, on the recommendation of the League, the Governor-General for Pakistan. The Editors came to know of this for the first time. While looks were exchanged Devadas Gandhi made no

secret of his 'mixed feelings' on the subject.

Secondly, speaking on the developments in connexion with the working out of the June 3 plan, he remarked that "Partition was the most crazy thing from top to bottom". "As Viceroy, I tried to avoid it, but it has become inevitable, since the League was determined not to yield on this point. Something had to be done to put matters right and I yielded unwillingly but in the consolation that this was the only way out in the circumstances." Alluding to Indian States, Mountbatten advised Editors to be discreet and wary. "You have got to be a little patient."

As for himself, he said, he had agreed to be Governor-General. "I am anxious however that the period of my stay should be as brief as possible. Already I have shortened the process of transfer from June 1948 to August 1947. Our partition work has progressed faster than one could imagine. Believe me, gentlemen, the work I did as Commander-in-Chief of south-east Asia forces was a flea-bite compared to the task, responsibilities and ardousness of my work as Governor-General of India."

## 9. SGT. C. R.

The advent of C. R. in Government House as the first Indian Governor-General was historic in many ways. A frail figure clad in simple Khadi clothes and sandals on his feet walked slowly up into the Durbar Hall of the magnificent building and assumed charge amid a fanfare of trumpets and to the singing of *Jana Gana Mana*. The ceremony was simple, in striking and forceful contrast to the many scenes of pomp and pageantry held by the Governors-General under British rule. After taking the oath C. R. bowed to the crowd with folded hands, though he took the march past with the customary style of raising his arm. His speech on

the occasion was an example of that rounded wisdom and clear-headedness which have been a feature of his political career. He confessed he did not know warfare nor diplomacy as did Mountbatten. But those, like myself, who had knowledge of him for three decades and were aware of his probing mind, his piercing intellect despite his disarming manners, were convinced of his success in his new job. The greatest advantage he had over all his predecessors was that at the centre as well as in the provinces the Ministers were his friends, belonging to the Congress, or of Congress persuasion.

On his assumption of the role of Governor-General, C. R. received congratulations and good wishes from all over the world—at home from Jinnāh of Pakistan to Kasim Razvi of Hyderabad, from his admirers in South India to even the erstwhile critics in North India. The communal peace that prevailed in the afflicted province of Bengal during his time as the Governor, though the ground for it had been paved by Mahatma Gandhi, was itself a happy augury and gave C. R. psychologically the best start possible in Delhi. Versed in the Upanishads and the Bhagawad Gita, he is able to draw his inspiration and quote extensively from them in his speeches and messages. Calm, cool, clear-headed, C. R. talks gently with suggestiveness that evokes response. I have heard many an Ambassador pay tribute to him for these qualities; indeed, C. R. has earned among the diplomatic circles a position of great respect and admiration as politician, strategist and philosopher.

Within the sphere of Indian administration the first Indian Governor-General was able to exercise an influence which was as great as it was unobtrusive. He had so arranged his conversations with the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and other Ministers that he kept himself almost daily informed of the view-points of all of them. Office sat lightly on C. R., for he moved with the humblest of his countrymen as well as with the highest.

His interviews to public men and publicists were frequent enough to enable him to have his fingers on the pulse of the nation and on all important branches of administration. Of course, it might be tempting for a Governor-General to create a party within the Government, for it may be recalled that when there was a Black and Tan movement in Ireland, Lord Northcliffe once made the suggestion that the King was against the Cabinet and immediately the Prime Minister himself made a statement in the House of Commons on behalf of the King that His Majesty had no views other than those of his Government. Thus the mischief of separating the King of England from the Cabinet was nipped in the bud. In India C.R. was in such close touch with Ministers and leaders of public influence that his own opinions were easily accessible to the Prime Minister. In other words, he functioned as a constitutional Governor-General in accordance with the highest standards followed in Britain.

In my capacity as journalist I have observed with much interest C. R.'s career, especially since the Congress session at Gaya in 1922. At that gathering he did not occupy a cottage in the leaders' camp but a small hut among the workers. He generally prefers a small room where he can do concentrated work. But he was the *de facto* leader of the session, for he was the only convincing interpreter of Gandhism at a time when Gandhiji was in jail, thus justifying his opposition to the Council-entry proposition of C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru. He did this first in the Subjects Committee with such wealth of argument and firmness of conviction that he defeated even the formidable combination of Das and Nehru. The proceedings of the Subjects Committee in that session were not open to the Press but Sri Prakasa (the present Commerce Minister) gave me a vivid account of the numerous scenes that characterized the sitting. Later, in the changed situation in the country, C. R. advocated not only Council-entry but even .



office-acceptance, to which Gandhiji eventually agreed. But when the War broke out, it was with considerable reluctance that C. R. obeyed the Congress High Command's order for withdrawal of Ministries from the provinces.

C. R., though a front rank leader of the Congress, did not become its President even once. Nor would he even allow his name to be suggested. He preferred the less spectacular role of lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi and the interpreter of his ideas. This unique position he commanded for more than a decade. There was no session of the Congress without C. R. producing the first draft of resolutions to be considered by the Working Committee for submission to the A. I. C. C. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru took charge of this responsibility after his return from the International Conference of Oppressed Nations held at Brussels and more so after 1930 when he felt that India should be placed on the map of the world, and Indians should view their own problems in their international settings. However, at the Tripuri session of the Congress in March 1939, which coincided with Gandhiji's fast at Rajkot over the freedom movement in Indian States, C. R. was looked up to for a lead because Subhas Chandra Bose and his Forward Bloc wished to strike a line of policy different from the Gandhian ideals. There was a seven-hour animated debate and finally C. R. rose amid pin-drop silence and delivered a singularly lucid speech ending with the challenge to President Bose: "I for one cannot accept your explanation of today in the face of your aspersions on the members of the Congress Working Committee before your election." His speech carried the day and the votes of the session. The Forward Bloc slowly petered out of the Congress.

C. R. is at his best when the task is most difficult or the opposition to it is most vehement. All his intellectual and physical energies he places unreservedly for any cause that he holds dear. Mahatma Gandhi's advice to the people

of South India to remove untouchability was taken up by him with a missionary zeal. Particularly when Gandhiji had threatened to fast over that issue, C. R. promptly worked up the legislation for Temple Entry in the Madras Assembly through Dr Subbaroyan. He made a similar effort in the Central Assembly, for which he visited Delhi, approached C. S. Ranga Iyer and sought my help as journalist. When C. S. Ranga Iyer introduced the Bill, there was no opposition from Government ; but a year later so much adverse opinion had been collected that the Bill was given due burial. Meanwhile, however, the publicity given to the measure considerably helped the movement as it enabled the public to see the reasons for the eventual abolition of untouchability. Similarly, C. R. led the prohibition movement in South India and when he became Premier, introduced prohibition in several districts so that today Madras is the first province to go completely dry.

The loss of revenue due to the prohibition movement in South India was made up by his ingenious introduction, as the Finance Minister, of the sales-tax. In that capacity he visited Delhi several times, particularly in connexion with the Conferences of Finance Ministers presided over by Sir James Grigg. I recall how the Punjab's Finance Minister Sir Manohar Lal one evening mentioned to me in glowing terms of the complete ease with which C. R. dominated over the conference and so to say eclipsed even Grigg.

C. R. is not only original in his way of thinking but even more original in his actions. This was noticed to the relief of the people in South India when at the height of the agitation against the Neil Statue on Mount Road, he had the statue itself removed quietly one night and placed suitably in the museum. This masterly stroke of C. R. left a trail of good humour all round. C. R. is not only a good speaker but wields a facile pen, and further, because of his originality

of thought and freshness of outlook his writings and speeches have received wide publicity in the Press and commanded public attention.

To me personally C. R. has endeared himself beyond expression. Though I happened to be among his numerous critics on the issue of partition of India, he did not allow this political difference of opinion to affect our personal relations. On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the South India Club held in New Delhi, it was my privilege as its President to request him to preside over the celebrations. I remarked in my speech that the steady growth of the Club was the result not of favouritism shown to South Indians in the Secretariat nor to the railway travel facilities provided by the Grand Trunk Express but to the intellectual qualities of South Indians at the competitive examinations held by the Federal Public Service Commission. In his reply, C. R. described my work in the field of journalism and referred to what he called my "daily success in it" as an instance of the qualities required for a go-ahead Indian. More recently, as Principal Information Officer in the Government of India, I had the privilege of very frequent interviews with C. R. and I profited greatly by his advice and suggestions. When he came to know that I was about to relinquish the post at the end of my contract period, he invited me to lunch which we had at the Moghal Gardens, and there he suggested that I should lose no time in writing my memoirs as he thought they would be useful to politicians and pressmen alike.

## 10. RAJEN BABU

From C. R. as the last Governor-General to Babu Rajendra Prasad as the first President. It was C. R. who had described Rajendra Prasad on the latter's sixtieth birthday as "The First Gentleman in India". To this great and

good man C. R. gracefully yielded place in Government House at Delhi on India's becoming a Sovereign Democratic Republic. The change-over has been effected with the smoothness of a family understanding—a precedent which deserves to be always followed. No doubt there were many who thought that C. R. had an equal claim for it and might have continued without displacement, particularly after his unique record as friend and philosopher among the Ambassadors or foreign diplomats in the Capital. But there were many more who felt that Rajen Babu had the additional, unique advantage of having, as the President of the Constituent Assembly, fully imbibed the spirit of the new Constitution. For his own part, Rajen Babu has never coveted any post nor sought any honours and might have perhaps retired into himself again as he had done several times after serving at the top on critical occasions. But his numerous friends in Parliament made him a joint request that they be permitted to propose him for the Presidentship; and Rajen Babu, who has never yet refused a call to serve, gave his consent a few days later. So on 26th January 1950 Rajendra Prasad assumed the Presidentship with, I found, even greater modesty and simplicity than did C. R. his Governor-Generalship.

As for C. R., I saw him return to Madras smilingly, though full of reflections, and there occupy, in sharp contrast to the enormously imposing Government House in New Delhi, just a small three-roomed house in an extremely out of the way suburban locality where he did not like to have even a telephone, ready to avail of the offer of transport by a jeep if the car from the obliging Madras Governor was not readily forthcoming, and agreeing to preside over important non-political gatherings for the essaying of his ripe experience and mature wisdom. Surely such adaptability can only be the sign of an inner lofty detachment!

An endearing simplicity and directness and a marked

desire to be unostentatiously helpful have been the characteristic features of Rajen Babu's career which I have watched for over three decades, since the Congress session at Gaya. Bihar might not have presented many all-India political leaders as have some other provinces, but she has produced one Rajen Babu to symbolize her greatness in men and resources. Endowed with a sweet temper which is never lost in the most heated of controversies, he is best fitted to fill the role of peace-maker and reconciler of differences. By his smile he disarms critics. He has only one enemy in this world—Asthma. The only complaint I used to hear about Rajen Babu as Congress leader was that he surrendered to the Gandhian view even though he might have differed from him on any issue. He demonstrated this utter surrender unto Gandhiji when he left the Food Ministry in the National Government with this remark: "Gandhiji has advised de-control. He must be right. But the Government of India is against de-control. So I quit."

In my professional wanderings I had to visit Patna several times. No visit was complete without calling on Rajen Babu at the Sadaqat Ashram situated in a mango grove on the banks of the Ganges, from where he directed the activities of the Congress organization and gave his rulings as President of the Congress Parliamentary Board. He rarely gives you hot news but he is ever ready to discuss with you if you want to understand why the Congress has adopted a certain policy or why it refuses to modify certain other. When you get such an opportunity for discussion you really strike at a mine of information throwing a light on the whole controversy. Invariably you are convinced, but if you persist in your own theories, he will smile and smile—to indicate that you are wrong. This was at any rate the experience of a journalist friend who tried to cross-examine him at Wardha in 1940 on the Congress policy of

boycotting the Legislatures at a time of war with Hitler. No one ever doubts his sincerity or sense of fairplay—not even the zemindars of Bihar, under the leadership of the Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga, however tormented they felt over the abolition of the landlord system.

From Government House in New Delhi today Rajen Babu presides over the destiny of India's millions. The Constitution charges him with the responsibility of securing to all its citizens Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. A true Gandhiite and a firm believer in world peace on the basis of non-violence and truth, Rajendra Prasad may be expected to uphold and defend the four-fold principles of the Consitution to the satisfaction of one-fifth of the human race.

## 11. "POLITICAL APPRECIATION"

As early as 1932 the necessity was felt by the Government of India of sending an objective survey, from time to time, of the political trends in the country, to London and the Consular representatives abroad. But it was never seriously taken up till after Sir Stafford Cripps visited India.

This political diary came to be called "Political Appreciation" and became an important part of the duties assigned to the P. I. O.

Since March 1946, with the visit of the Cabinet Delegation, politics became dynamic and I had to devote special attention to this part of my duty. I had a passion for it apart from my own journalistic career which so fortunately coincided with the upsurge of the National Movement, I used to write for several years, till the date of my joining the Bureau, the political diary on the front page of *Roy's Weekly* in Delhi captioned "A Wayfarer's Diary". I have described elsewhere how this weekly diary came to be looked

forward to for several years, particularly since 1942, by political India, by Editors of several newspapers in the country and in Government of India circles, as containing a special blend of news and views presented in a manner which earned for me in journalistic circles the sobriquet of 'Garvin Iyengar'.

But to write as a free-lance journalist on politics and for one's own journal is one thing, and quite another to write objectively for the Government of India on facts which cannot be challenged, and present them in a manner which would achieve almost the same result. Precision and accuracy, apart from objectivity, had to be kept in view, and tendentiousness had to be eschewed even in the presentation or correlation of facts. When I was in Reuters, there were several occasions on which a survey of the political trends was prepared and cabled which the Secretary of State for India used for reference in Parliament. But that was as representative of a News Agency where there was none above me to pronounce approval or disapproval of my copy. But in the Government of India, the copy had to be okayed by the Home Minister before it was cabled to the Ambassadors. And I am glad to feel that no objection was raised to the text or character of the Appreciation; on the other hand, the objectivity in my productions was often most highly commended. Whenever the Home Member in the early years (Sir John Thorne) felt like making a change, he would prefer a talk and in the light of it, permit me to have my way or to make any suitable changes. Later, when the Interim Coalition Government was functioning, *Dawn* the Muslim League organ, once editorially referred to the Political Appreciation as "Congress-minded". This itself confirmed the close link that had existed between the League section of the Coalition and the League newspaper in Delhi. However, objectivity remained the guiding factor as I have always believed in the principle that the presentation of facts is the judgement in itself. Still, even in this form of specialized work, it is good to watch

how others look at it. Changes made by the Home Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, though few and far between, were always instructive. Towards the end of my official career, particularly after the shifting of external publicity from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to that of External Affairs, this work came to an end. Thus came to a close the series of Political Appreciations started in 1932, which used to be approved by Viceroys in the early years and latterly by the Home Ministers and which was so eagerly looked forward to by Indian Ambassadors in the most eventful years of 1946 to the end of 1948. I understand that more recently a periodical directive of a different type prepared in the Ministry of External Affairs has taken its place.

## 12. THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

Several opportunities came my way to study the problems of the North-West Frontier Province of India before the creation of Pakistan. I had availed of almost every one of them, because the Army problems of India were so closely connected with the defence of India on that border. I was responsible for flashing the news of the abduction of Miss Ellis by the trans-frontier tribesmen from Kohat in 1923. The manner in which the British Government in India set in motion their entire machinery, combing out the several villages of the trans-frontier area and maintaining stricter control over the movements of the people were explained to me one day by Sir Dennis Bray, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs in those days. The credit for the rescuing of the abducted girl, however, went to Major Moghul Buz Khan of the Political Service—a very tall handsome Pathan, who became a personal friend of mine. The Government of India's message announcing the recovery of Miss Ellis stated that she had been rescued "without any apparent ill effects". The



incident steeled the hearts of Britishers to tame the tribesmen at all costs and to pursue their forward policy of road construction and the encouragement of Khassadars belonging to the tribesmen, while there always remained an opposite opinion which was for withdrawal of the Army to the more settled districts and the introduction of reforms in the territory.

A debate in the Central Assembly in 1923 was followed by the appointment of a Committee to visit the North-West Frontier and suggest a solution to its problems. I had the opportunity of accompanying the Committee and reporting its proceedings. From the beginning the members of the Committee were sharply divided amongst themselves, and no wonder their Report provided no solution and, therefore, no action was taken on it for several years—not even the introduction of the system of election to the municipality of Peshawar. Therefore two persons were nominated by the Government of India to represent the viewpoint of the people in the Council of State and in the Central Assembly. The former was Major Sir Mohd. Akbar Khan and the latter Sir Abdul Quyum. None of them put any questions concerning their province, but whenever the situation in the North-West Frontier came to be discussed at the instance of members hailing from other provinces, they were put up to speak not what the people thought but to justify the British Government's policy.

The Reforms Enquiry Committee began with a visit to the Khyber Pass as far as Landi Kana in front of the Afghan Custom House. As we proceeded by car from Peshawar to the line that demarcates Afghanistan, Sir Dennis Bray, a very good historian, related story after story of the invasions which came through that territory into India. The members of the Committee seemed considerably impressed by the importance of the area to India, and were exercised as to

what attitude they should take in regard to the control of the area between the Durand Line and the Afghan boundary line usually described as "No-man's Land" because the people there owed allegiance to no authority either in India or in Afghanistan. Standing on the top of a small mound close to the demarcated line, Sir Dennis Bray, in order to emphasize the importance of the strategic area, remarked: "If you step beyond this line, I would not hold myself responsible for your safety."

Lunch hour was drawing near. We knew we had to walk to the cottage overlooking a Buddhist stupa at Landi Kana itself. I was not worried. But Mr Rangachari who was there with his son was very anxious as to how to get vegetarian food in that land of Pathans. Arrangements had no doubt been made with the help of the trans-frontier Hindus to provide vegetarian meals. But those who came to serve it looked very much Muslim, particularly in their dress. Mr Rangachari looked completely bewildered and turned to me as if for relief, wanting to know as to whether they were Hindus. The answer given to me was that not only were they Hindus, but Brahmins. Even this did not satisfy Mr Rangachari and I was therefore put to the necessity of cross-examining the hospitable Hindus of the no-man's land. The chief among them thereupon pulled out his *yagnopavita* (sacred thread) from underneath his shirt, and added: "We do *sandhya* and utter *gayatri*." Now Mr Rangachari was so satisfied that he was the first to rush to the lunch table! A huge flat circular brown bread of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet diameter and about 2 inches thick was laid on our table. We were told that this bread as prepared would last several days without decomposition. Some vegetables and soup were also served, followed by some Quetta grapes and delicious coffee.

In the course of the Committee's tour, we visited near Kohat a factory where rifles were being manufactured by tribesmen. Some of the rifles resembled the latest designs

imported from Britain. How the tribesmen were able to manufacture such types of rifles with little or no special training for it was a matter of surprise. It was also a matter of surprise that this rifle factory was at all allowed to be run. The questions put to Sir Dennis Bray, however, elicited no reply. But we were told that every Pathan valued his rifle as a friend. As we were going out of the factory we were each given a rifle as a mark of courtesy and we all returned them on the advice of Sir Dennis Bray. While returning the rifle that was presented to me, I remarked that I had no licence, to which came the remark from the factoryman : "Is not possession itself a licence? "

My next visit to the North-West Frontier was along with a party of M. L. A.s headed by Pandit Motilal Nehru, leader of the Swarajists, in 1925. This visit was also the result of another debate held in the Central Assembly on the military expenditure incurred in the North-West Frontier. It was again the Foreign Secretary who took us round and showed us several areas particularly close to the tribal border. An aerial trip had been arranged by the Frontier Government. The M. L. A.s suffered from cold feet and it was not until Mr N. M. Joshi and myself went by the first flight and returned that others gathered courage to go up. As soon as I landed back, I was greeted by the M. L. A.s : "The Press always guides." Pandit Motilal Nehru did not join the group as he had an engagement in the city with the local leaders. But Mr Srinivasa Iyengar came back from the flight full of impressions and, as usual, with interesting commentaries on the policy of Government. This tour ended with a visit to the Swat Valley and the fort of the Nawab of Dir. An interesting discussion ensued between Mr Srinivasa Iyengar and Pandit Motilal Nehru as to the meaning of the word 'Hindukush'. Mr Srinivasa Iyengar quoted from many authorities to show that the area belonged to the Hindus and

that was why it was called Hindukush Range, whereas Pandit Motilal Nehru, relying on some Persian poetry and other authorities, gave a slightly different connotation which seemed to annoy Mr Srinivasa Iyengar.

Nothing happened in the Frontier by way of reforms for several years, not even after the publication of the Simon Commission Report. It was at the second Round Table Conference that the question was raised because of the pressure of the Congress which demanded autonomy for all provinces. Sir Abdul Quyum was a delegate to this Conference and it was one of his characteristically witty speeches that really tilted the scale in favour of reforms for his province. At a luncheon in London when he got up to plead the cause of the Frontier people some one in the audience shouted : "You are just a little fly." This remark infuriated Sir Abdul Quyum who gave it back rather neatly : "We may be a fly ; But we know how to give you trouble. Think of the fly that gets into your pant and you then know what it is. I would not fight with you but I will get into your pant." This kind of speech-making has the greatest appeal to the Western intellect! Reforms to the North-West Frontier as a separate province were conceded.

Again, it was my good fortune to be present in Peshawar on the day of the introduction of those reforms. The ceremony was held in the Town Hall and there were speeches which showed that a democratic constitution could grow even among the Pathans and in spite of Jirga traditions, if only they were led wisely. Sir Abdul Quyum as the first Premier did a lot of good to the people. One of his advisers was Mr K. P. S. Menon of the I. C. S. When I visited Peshawar once again, I saw him giving interviews in the Secretariat to a number of Pathans and talking with them in Pushtu with remarkable fluency. In fact, several Pathan friends including the Speaker of the Frontier Assembly told me: "We thought

that people from South India are good at English, but it seems they can conquer also the Pathans with Pushtu."

The North-West Frontier had its trials and tribulations before there could be peace even in the "settled" districts. Sir George Cunningham had been the Governor there for the longest period of years. I saw him when he was Chief Commissioner, I had talks with him when he became Governor ; he was Governor under the British rule, under the Congress administration from the Centre, under the Congress-cum-League directive from the Centre and latterly under the League Government of Pakistan. He knows my language (Tamil), for he did converse with me in that language fluently in Peshawar, but he knows Pushtu better and is able to address gatherings in this language. Such servicemen are few. The province is now under Mr Abdul Qaiyum who is Premier. A former Congressman and even Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly when Mr Bhulabhai Desai was its chief, Mr Abdul Qaiyum was a hot gospeller for undiluted nationalism. But when Mr Bhulabhai Desai was ill, he tried to influence him in favour of a parity between the Congress and the League in the Central Government under the Wavell Plan. Actually, he was at heart a Pakistani, for in one of his contributions to the *Bombay Chronicle* (then edited by S. A. Brelvi) he aired views contrary to his own professions as a Congressmen. When I questioned him at his New Delhi residence over this article, he felt rather embarrassed but pleaded : "How many are shrewd enough like you?" A few weeks later he brought out his book *Gold and Guns on the Pathan Frontier* which only confirmed his pro-Pakistan attitude. As the Congress-League or communal parity was not conceded, the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly made a *volte face* and joined Mr Jinnah and, later when the Khan Sahib Ministry of the Congress was dissolved, became the Premier of the most

turbulent province of India. Himself a Kashmiri Muslim, Mr Abdul Qaiyum as Premier of the North-West Frontier sent the tribesmen on an invasion into Kashmir—a fact of which Sir George Cunningham as Governor gave a private warning in a letter to the Commander-in-Chief in India, General Sir Rob. Lockhart, as was disclosed before the U.N. Commission in Delhi, and practically admitted by the Government of India in a press note following the disclosures made by *Blitz* of Bombay. Apart from the part he played in sending tribesmen from the North-West Frontier into Kashmir in order to acquire Kashmir for Pakistan and his administrative achievements including the attempted subjugation of the Khan brothers, it seems that Mr Abdul Qaiyum has not succeeded in impressing even his neighbours in Afghanistan. According to a communique issued by the Afghanistan Government and elaborated by *Islah*, the semi-official organ, the North-West Frontier Government cannot provide clothing and food even in the provincial capital, but imprisons and silences dissatisfied elements, confiscates properties of Pathans on preposterous feudal pretexts and transplants non-Pathan refugees in an economically poor province in order to create supporters.

### 13. TITLES UNDER BRITISH RULE

The last of the Honours List under the British rule was that of 1st January 1948, but it was published with the date of 14th August 1947, i.e. the day before India became independent of British control. The list was a brief one and was confined practically to Britishers, particularly those who were retiring from India. Only two or three rulers of Indian States received honours.

I refer to this subject because twice every year for an unbroken period of 18 years when I was in the Associated

Press, I had to get these honours lists published. In those days, people craved for honours—officials, non-officials, businessmen, Maharajas, Rajas, I. C. S., non-I. C. S., Secretaries of Government and even their stenographers—and the list, under an arrangement made with the Government of India (which I myself had to observe as the Principal Information Officer for nearly three years) was supplied to the news agencies a few hours in advance and then to Press correspondents at a fixed hour. So the secrets of these lists came to be known to me several hours ahead of others. Telephones used to ring the whole day from friends far and near, in order to know who had received what titles. The 31st of December for the New Year and the day before the King's birthday in June used to give us unnecessary worries, besides unwelcome visitors. There was a special technique employed in the wiring out of these honours to the newspapers, for when the list of South Indian names was reached there was every chance of the telegraphist going wrong if they were not telegraphed exactly as given, and so the father's name had to be separated with initials from the titled person's name. After the installation of the teleprinter in the Associated Press, the entire lists were carried over the teleprinter lines and there was no need to edit the names.

The lists were received on the understanding that the contents were not to be published and must remain secret till daybreak next day, i.e. the 1st of January or the King's birthday, both of which were declared holidays. Yet, members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, as well as important officials who expected to receive titles either by virtue of their seniority or record of service, whether they were deserving of them or not, were most anxious to know whether their names had been included in the lists. It was a very difficult time and one could not excuse oneself every time by saying : "It is a secret till tomorrow." That would not be proper with friends, though the undertaking was not to 'publish' it

till the next day.

I was one of those who were offered the title of 'Rao Bahadur' and when I was for two or three days disinclined to accept any title, I was even promoted from 'Rao Bahadur' to 'Diwan Bahadur' ! This was shortly after my return from the visit to the North-West Frontier in 1924. Sir Dennis Bray who presided over the Reforms Enquiry Committee used to watch my work as representative of the news agencies, and was pleased that my daily summary was an objective and balanced presentation of the proceedings of the Committee in which the Muslim point of view had clashed against the Hindu, especially on the question of re-amalgamation of the North-West Frontier with the Punjab. The Press in England was fed by Reuters through my messages about the proceedings of this Committee from start to finish. There was no occasion for Sir Dennis Bray as Foreign Secretary to keep the Secretary of State daily informed, for my Press messages were considered comprehensive enough. I remember Sir Dennis Bray once going through my cables was so satisfied with them that he dispensed with sending his own report to London. It was a few months later that he wanted to mark his confidence in me by offering me a title. I was not aware of this move until one day K. C. Roy addressed me as 'Rao Bahadur' and then 'Dewan Bahadur'. I was amazed. Roy was not against accepting titles and in fact he was a C. I. E. I however held a different view. A few weeks later when I met Sir Dennis Bray at a garden party he took me aside and remarked : "Roy has told me about the title business. You have disappointed me. I wish you had agreed." I smiled apologetically and there was an end of the matter. My other colleague, U. N. Sen, later got a Knighthood. This was to keep pace with the other journalist, R. S. Sarma who as a journalist became a friend of Lord Ronaldshay and was later dubbed a Knight. Even in recent years,



there have been cases of journalists accepting titles, and at any rate I cannot recollect the name of a single Indian journalist who, after receiving titles under the British Government, had actually renounced them even when British titles fell into disrepute.

The dispensing with the system of titles has meant the abolition of that particular section of the Secretariat and also the end of a series of pilgrimages to Delhi by self-seekers and title-hunters who threw parties to high-placed officials, foreign or Indian. The abuse to which the system had degenerated robbed it of its most essential basis, namely recognition of public service. The Government of India have not yet settled down to decide whether the system of conferring titles should be revived or not, but it is bound to become a live issue some day or other as public-spirited philanthropists and leaders in science and literature come up in numbers. Then of course the titles would be of the truly Indian origin and for real service rendered to humanity.

#### 14. MORE GANDHIAN MEMORIES

To have not only lived all through the Gandhian era, but to have heard him speak and seen him practise truth and non-violence and achieve freedom for India was a privilege given to but a few. As years roll by and generations come to hear of what Gandhiji had done for India, we shall have the privilege of being known as the contemporaries of the Mahatma. It was my good fortune, among a limited number of journalists, to have had personal contacts with the Mahatma and enjoyed his confidence. My first contact with him was in 1916 in South India which was renewed almost year after year at the Congress and at Conferences or other important political gatherings, besides

very frequent meetings at Delhi or Simla. He did always keep in mind that when he talked to me he was talking not merely to the Press of India but also, because of my connexion with Reuters, to the Press of the world. But with him, one never was a mere means. He had a way of adding to the intercourse some small but significant detail that made all the difference between meeting for public purposes and the personal contact.

I have in various chapters referred to my conversations with the Mahatma and his interviews, the statements that he gave or supplied, or the elucidations that he furnished on important political occasions. The interviews that I had with him immediately on Lord Reading's offer of what was called Provincial Autonomy in 1921, the exhaustive statement that he gave at the Gauhati Congress on the death of Swami Shraddhanand, the mono-syllabic but key answer to me at Dr Ansari's residence in Delhi when at 2. a.m. he came from Lord Irwin after the preliminaries of his Pact with him had been settled, are a few of the many incidents that will ever remain in my memory. But it was not so much his readiness to meet my demands as a newsman that appealed to me as the kindness with which he received and consoled me shortly after I lost my wife in 1930. The news of my bereavement had appeared in the papers but I did not expect that Mahatma Gandhi would have noticed it or if he had heard of it, would have remembered it. But the moment he saw me at the Harijan Sevak Sangh office in Old Delhi, he called me in and offered me his condolences and his advice. This one touching incident was enough to bind me personally to the Mahatma in affection and reverence.

My last conversation with the Mahatma was when I was the Principal Information Officer in the Government of India. It was in July 1947. Gandhiji was arranging to go

on his Communal Peace mission to Bihar and thence to Calcutta. The first Independence Day was to be celebrated on the 15th of August and I was anxious to collect messages from leaders not only for publication in a special number of "Indian Information"—the official journal of the Government of India—but also the Press in India and abroad. Naturally, I wanted a message first from the Father of the Nation. When I approached him during his stroll after the evening prayer meeting in Bhangi Colony at New Delhi, he heard me but hesitated to give an answer. I expressed my keenness to have his message in Delhi before he left for Bihar. But he said : "I shall consider if I can give one to your representative in Calcutta." I enquired whether the difficulty was one of time. He replied : "No, but one of inclination." I had no choice ; I therefore instructed my representative in Calcutta to approach Mahatmaji and remind him of it. The final reply received was also "No". So the First Independence Day of 1947 went off without a message from Mahatmaji—because, to him, the atmosphere was reeking with violence and hatred.

Four months passed and Gandhiji's pleadings with the Indian Government resulted in a gift of 55 crores of rupees to Pakistan in order to help that infant state to stabilize herself if not to put her in a conciliatory mood towards India. This amount represented the gold reserve allotted to Pakistan. Simultaneously, he undertook his fast, while residing at Birla House, for the purpose of communal harmony in India's Capital—a fast which he broke only when the leaders in Delhi pledged to preserve peace in that same manner as in the September of that year at Calcutta when the leaders there had given an undertaking to preserve communal unity. His post-prayer speeches of the second half of January 1948 revealed unreservedly his passionate and urgent desire for communal peace and harmony not merely in India but between India and Pakistan as well.

What happened in Delhi after the assassination of Gandhiji and how the whole nation mourned over the calamity and how messages poured from all over the world sympathizing with Nehru and other leaders in the Government is a matter of common knowledge. The scenes in Delhi were fully covered by the Press in India through news and by means of photographs, while the All-India Radio rendered a commendably prompt and efficient service in different languages. The Immersion Ceremony of his *Asthi* which took place in Allahabad was an event not only of political interest but involving a deep religious significance to the innumerable thousands who witnessed it at the confluence of the Jumna and the Ganges. This took place on 12th February. I had conducted by a chartered plane a party of 16 European and 7 Indian correspondents and some movie and still-camera men. When we arrived at the Bamrauli aerodrome, we were handed over a copy containing the ritual of the ceremony written in Sanskrit. This was explained to the correspondents in English. The black arm-band supplied by the Press Information Bureau in Delhi with the words "Press accredited to the Government of India" combined with the green badge supplied by the U. P. Government in Allahabad helped the correspondents to get admission practically everywhere, though near the confluence of the two rivers some of them could not get admission to the boats.

That day Allahabad was not weeping as Delhi did ; Allahabad was steeped in thoughtful silence. When the train containing the Urn arrived at the Allahabad station, not a word was uttered, not a whisper was heard and even the vigorous and energetic Pandit Nehru officiated in hushed silence. The Pandit tenderly held the Palanquin on which the Urn was kept; Azad, Kidwai, Patel and Pant assisted in carrying it to the lorry that was to be driven in a six mile long procession. In the hushed presence of the great crowd at the station, even the Governor Mrs Sarojini Naidu had discarded her official

pomposity. Premier Pant, tall and stately, stood by as if attention was his only duty. The bearers of the Palanquin marched to the lorry and when the Urn was laid, all eyes were turned towards it. Patel sat in front and on the left was Ramadas Gandhi with three or four others of Gandhiji's family. Planes hovered over-head dropping down flowers and petals every few minutes all along the route to the river for two hours.

Pressmen had been given two lorries to travel by whenever their heavy photographic equipment would not bear carrying. But most of them preferred to walk. I was struck with the silent co-operative competition displayed by the photographers who vied with one another in order that India's leader's last journey could be preserved for posterity.

*"Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram, Pathitha Pavana Sita Ram,"* This Ram Dhun which I had first heard in 1921 at the Ahmedabad session of the Congress where Gandhiji was the central figure, and which opened Gandhiji's prayer meetings, was heard sung in the railway coach of the special train as it entered Allahabad, then as the procession started; later throughout the six mile long road it was chanted by millions, young and old, not as a mere meaningless chant but with a renewed devotion and understanding. It seemed as though the very elephants standing near the banks of the river stood to attention with eyes fixed on the Urn.

The procession ended, the Palanquin was lifted and placed on a duck boat which was to move into the river and propelled to the confluence where the Urn was to be consigned to the waters. The leaders stood on a specially erected platform. Cameramen and photographers again became most active. Journalists kept on recording their impressions; every one in the crowd was almost lost in contemplation, in adoration as well as in admiration of the achievements of the Mahatma. To a few of the foreign correspondents

who were particularly anxious to know more of the significance of the occasion, an explanation was furnished. They understood and visibly appreciated that all that lingers after death is the memory of the good deeds to be conveyed and communicated to posterity not in the form of annointed bodies as the mummies of Egypt or as the dead body of Lenin but handed down from mouth to mouth through generations. even as the teachings of ancient teachers are still preserved in this country.

Not many of us could go to the Sangam to watch the ceremony ; Jai Prakash Narain, and even Pyarelal, Gandhiji's secretary, were left behind. P. N. Saprú was sitting with his wife in a car and as soon as he saw me he rushed up and asked: "What happened in Delhi ? Can he be brought to life ? You told me when Gandhiji was having his 21 days' fast that, according to him, he would live for 125 years. Then why this death and in such tragic circumstances ? How are you all taking it in Delhi ?.....What about the Government ? What is the future of Kashmir ? Is there any hope of our keeping that country ? Is there really any difference of view between Nehru and Patel ?" Such were the thoughts provoked in the mind of a Judge of the Allahabad High Court. A former member of the Council of State, the son of Sir Tej Bahadur Saprú literally wept, asking me finally—"Why did he die ?" P. N. Saprú wanted no reply, only some one to share his grief. Near by was standing in a black suit an Englishman, a fellow Judge of the Allahabad High Court.

From the bank we looked in silence at the ceremony that was going on mid-stream. The radio was telling us all on the bank of the actual ceremony as it proceeded in the Sangam. The commentator was brief with his description. A few minutes later the duck boat returned to the bank and now Pandit Nehru spoke. He did not tremble, he did not falter. He spoke as only he can. He said that after Gandhi it

was Gandhi's policy, that after Gandhi it was Gandhi's teachings of love and non-violence and that there could be no departure from them in India, at any rate not in his [Nehru's] time. Some one in the crowd remarked: "Is not Patel the coming man?" Yes, but he could not be a different man, it was the same old Patel who had imbibed Gandhi's teachings earlier than Nehru, who practises those teachings, but only conveys them more pointedly in words that cannot be misunderstood.

I returned to Delhi the same evening by the chartered plane with my party of journalists. I was anxious to return early because the photos taken at Allahabad by the officer of the Press Information Bureau had to be developed, printed and distributed to the newspapers that very night for publication next morning along with news of Allahabad's homage to the Mahatma. This collection of photographs forms an impressive chapter of the pictorial records of Gandhiji in the Bureau. The demand for these photographs not only from the Press but also from the public grew so clamant that there was once a proposal to commercialize it. Later, however, when the Gandhi Memorial Committee was formed, the photographs were supplied on the understanding that the proceeds would be entirely devoted to the Fund.

A visit to Sevagram when Gandhiji was alive was not only a source of inspiration but enlightenment. A visit to Sevagram, after his death, occasions reflections that are sad, but impressions that are hopeful as his spirit continues to pervade there. Of course you poignantly miss the central figure. You have now only the small room—a spot sacred and hope-inspiring: sacred because that was where Gandhiji sat, reclined and slept after the day's toil in the cause of humanity: hope-inspiring because the disciples are keeping on the service as well as the form and tradition of Gandhiji's ideals.

I was leading a party of journalists and cameramen who accompanied Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as he visited Sevagram on Nov. 3, 1948. (It happened to be my birthday.) As the Sardar stepped in and stood motionless with his eyes half-closed as if in prayer, there was an atmosphere of reverence for the dear departed and love for his memory. The filmmen tried to shoot, but there was not enough light in the room. The photographers, however, were busy and recorded the touching scene in which Vallabhbhai was seated in front of the bed that lay there, his daughter Shrimati Maniben, the Governor of C. P. (Shri Mangaldas Pakwasa) and the Premier Ravi Shankar Shukla. The room was scented with joss-sticks, everything appeared as spick and span as it used to be when Gandhiji was alive. In fact it looked as if Gandhiji had just gone out to come back any moment. The books, the photographs, the pictures, the cup and the bowl, the sandals, the bed, the reclining pillow, everything was there.

I had visited Sevagram several times before, and this visit brought to my mind not only those several occasions, but also the very last when in the Bhangi Colony at New Delhi he said: "So Sardar has bagged you." I also recalled the many exclusive interviews he gave me and once described me in the presence of Sir Stafford Cripps as a 'Shark'.

There were many other similar memories, but even these were cut short, for in the stillness of Gandhiji's room in the Ashram, with the morning sun warmly peeping in, a gentleman with a beautiful voice sang *Vaishnava Janato* and followed it with "*Raghupati Raghava Rajaram*" so melodiously and so impressively that I joined it in full-throated measure. None of us was anxious to leave that atmosphere, but the schedule of events fixed for Sardar Patel had to be gone through, and he was the first to get up. As I was looking at the narrow-sized apartments of the Ashram, Ariyanayagam proudly showed us the room where Rajkumari Amrit Kaur used to stay as the Secretary of the Mahatma—after Mahadev Desai's



death. The next item was a visit to the cottage next to Mahatmaji's dedicated to the memory of and in fact used to be occupied by Kasturba. Here sat twenty persons, the chief among them gave accounts of the progress of either a hospital that was being run for the benefit of the villages in the surrounding areas or a school that was being maintained or the vocational training centre or the charka classes, the *gur* manufacturing centre, etc.—all illustrative of the life and industry flowing from Gandhiji's teachings for the peaceful progress of humanity. And Sardar Patel in his address to the large gathering assembled in Mahadev Bhawan struck the right note when he emphasized those very ideals of service.

## 15. NEHRU AND PATEL

Free India depends for her all-round progress on the right type of leadership at the Centre and in the Provinces and States. The lead given at the Centre sets the tone for all the Units. It is, therefore, to the good fortune of this country that we have in Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel two personalities who have characteristics each complementary to the other. Having watched both these personages not only as politicians for three decades but more closely during the last three years in the administration at the Centre, a reference to their characteristics would be useful, for never has there been a combination of humanism and realism so complete as in Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai.

Both are God-fearing, though their outward appearances may not reveal this. It is only on rare occasions, perhaps only at semi-religious functions, that we find them in their spiritual colours. During December 1948 I saw Pandit Nehru at Mysore praying with folded hands, along with the priests, for

the prosperity of a Science Institute, of which he was laying the foundation stone. He did it in such an earnest manner that those nearby found him to be a believer also in rituals, and not only in spirituality. In fact, Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar (the Diwan) mentioned this in a conversation with me as among his impressions of Pandit Nehru's tour of Mysore. As for Sardar Patel, I saw him at Benares receiving benedictions from the pandits in a God-fearing and thanks-giving mood on his recovery from the illness of 1948.

Both are clean fighters, and while Nehru likes to play sixers, Patel as a good batsman tires out the bowlers and achieves an excellent score. Both are untiring workers, allowing themselves practically no rest, either physical or mental. They are like great diamonds, with this difference, that if Sardar Patel is rough-hewn, valued intrinsically high, Nehru is the finished product, cut with many facets and therefore shining in several directions. Humanism characterizes the outlook of both but also with a difference, in that while Patel's humanism is confined to strengthening the Indian Nation on the basis of political peace and economic betterment, that of Pandit Nehru embraces the world of which India is an important part.

With these mutually complementary, but in no way contradictory, characteristics, both Nehru and Patel are not only able to grasp and solve the problems facing the country in their entirety, but to face whatever forces of reaction that may manifest themselves. Pandit Nehru has stated publicly that not a day passes without his seeing Sardar Patel and being in the closest consultation with him on all matters of policy and administration. Similarly, Sardar Patel does not take any major decision without consulting the Prime Minister. This combination, so useful to the country's progress, has perhaps disappointed a certain section of politicians.

Nehru is a historian and has made deep study of so many

subjects that he has an instinctive grasp of the core of any problem placed before him and a ready reaction to any given situation. His knowledge of humanity's problems gives him a certain breadth of thought, and a logic of ideas. The bigger the audience or the greater the scope of the subject, the more vigorous and determined is his approach to it. This was evident when he addressed the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in 1947, then the session of the E. C. A. F. E. in Ootacamund in 1948, and the Conference on the future of Indonesia convened by him early in 1949. Though the recognition of Pandit Nehru as Asia's leader was sought to be questioned in the beginning and therefore the immediate response to his call for organizing a Secretariat for the Asian Relations Conference was inadequate, yet the turn of events in China and in the Far East (including Indonesia) has thrust the leadership of Asia on India, as Pandit Nehru mentioned in his speeches at Washington in October 1949.

Sardar Patel has his intuition to guide him, apart from a clear and intense view of any subject obtained from talks with others—who are as a rule experts. He knows his own mind, and most correctly senses the working of the Indian mind. He can therefore isolate any Indian problem, however knotty or complicated, and provide a solution. This was demonstrated in his achievement of the unification of Indian States. The first State he touched was the weakest one in the whole of India—situated in Orissa—and it was by careful planning and slow progress that he walked like a Colossus on the scene of Indian States, making the Rulers one after another sign the Instrument of Accession and the people either to join themselves into unions or merge with the adjoining Provinces. Whoever proved intractable got from Patel a long rope to hang himself with. Patient and forbearing, the Sardar allowed natural forces to create situations that lead to political unity and administrative reforms. Kashmir he has not yet visited, though the problem of this Frontier State has been engaging

his attention, along with that of the Prime Minister, for a pretty long time. His own study of the Kashmir problem is perhaps not confined to the accounts given by Pandit Nehru or Sheikh Abdullah. If Pandit Nehru would like a more forward policy in Kashmir then perhaps Sardar Patel would restrain him. Likewise, if Sardar Patel had intended to adopt a more forward policy in Hyderabad, Pandit Nehru would restrain him. Thus, indeed, the two personalities are the two indispensable counterparts of one integrated whole, with apparently different functions but one and indivisible objective.

Pandit Nehru as the Prime Minister has to talk more often than Sardar Patel. He writes down his speeches only on rare occasions : but I have seen him doing this in an incredibly brief space of time ; yet they were word-perfect. In his *ex tempore* speeches he begins usually slow but warms up in the style of a writer and never an orator. Sardar Patel, too, is not an orator, but he is a most effective speaker. While Nehru is inclined not to wound anybody's feelings, Sardar Patel would not mind that if his instinct prompts such a course. This was particularly noticed at the Jaipur Session of the Congress when Sardar Patel hit out against the R.S.S. as well as the Communists. The only occasion, during the last two years, when Pandit Nehru hit out in public was at the Meerut Session of the Congress in 1947 when he charged Lord Wavell with sabotaging the Interim Government by removing its wheels one after another. However, at the Jaipur Session in 1948, the position of both Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel was happily different, for they were there not only as tried and trusted Congress leaders to whom the country looked for inspiration and guidance but they were there also as Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of a free India, including in that term all the Indian States. The Jaipur Session was noteworthy also in that for the first time the Congress was held in an Indian State and made the words "Indian" and "National" of the Congress as most comprehensive

both in scope and service. In the circumstances, the role played by Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya as Congress President was that of chief priest in a temple in charge of rituals ; indeed, as he himself remarked during the Session, it was the Government that ran the Congress.

Nehru is animated by a spirit of adventure and would go off the beaten track in order to know the people and the truth. His life is replete with such instances in India and abroad. As a journalist I here recall just one. When he was organizing the defence of the heroes of the Indian National Army of Subhas Chandra Bose (General Shah Nawaz, Capt. Saigal and Capt. Dhillon) he was gathering evidence from all available sources, and one afternoon he quietly descended on S. A. Iyer (who had been the Publicity Officer of Subhas Bose) and obtained several particulars. Incidentally, I may add that it was when the trial of these heroes was commenced in Red Fort that Pandit Nehru donned the barrister's gown which I saw him cast off at Allahabad twenty-five years before. As head of the Interim Government in 1946-47 he visited the North-West Frontier as well as Kashmir in spite of the warnings received from the Agents of the British Government. Pictures were taken and published of how Pandit Nehru stood manfully, and even smilingly, before the section of tribesmen who hurled stones on his car when he was speeding up the Khyber Valley. Similarly, in Calcutta in the summer of 1949 when a bomb was thrown near the spot on the maidan wherefrom he was addressing a gathering of lakhs of citizens, he just ignored the incident and went on with his theme of peace for the distracted province of Bengal.

In the case of Sardar Patel, there is no adventure possible; and even the occasion of the forced landing of his plane near Jaipur was converted by him into a 'picnic'. Whatever he undertakes and whichever function he attends, there is a plan and there is a purpose. He never does anything in a hurry; he sets a pace for everything, always sure of the

ground and therefore confident of the result to be achieved. He plans before he makes a move and he acts before he speaks. There is no backward step and no occasion to retract or recant. He has a composure and a detachment wholly admirable in an administrator—unlike Pandit Nehru who is ever restive and is actively engaged all the waking hours. Though Nehru does not sleep adequately, he keeps good health by his *yoga* practice and even during the working hours he now and then snatches two or three minutes to close his eyes, as if in meditation, in order to regain his norm and get refreshed for more work. This practice he extends even in the Secretariat because of the incessant calls on his mental and physical energies. Nehru sleeps well in the plane and that is his rest during tours. He usually occupies the third row seat on the left in the plane and does not sit in the sofa, for the reason, as he mentioned to me in a recent journey from Delhi to South India, that there had been a question in the Indian Parliament as to why a sofa should have been provided in the plane. Sardar Patel has heart trouble, which necessitates not only reclining on a sofa but flying at a low altitude. That is why a plane specially manufactured in Scotland has been purchased. Nehru is daily to be found in his office room in the Secretariat, though during non-office hours he functions from his residence, invariably till after midnight. As for Sardar Patel, his residence itself has become his office mainly because he cannot walk up the steps of the Secretariat building, and so No. 1 Aurangzeb Road has become the rendezvous of Secretariat chiefs for consultations, besides the inevitable meeting place for the Congress Working Committee, the Rajpramukhs Conference, and such other organizations requiring the Sardar's personal guidance. While his elder brother Vithalbhai Patel had displayed superb qualities in destroying the prestige and authority of British rule in India, Sardar Patel has been chiefly responsible for consolidating everything Indian—the National Congress as an organization,

peace in the land, the States into an integrated whole and the Services loyal and hard-working. While the Sardar is a guarantor of peace in India, Pandit Nehru is a harbinger of goodwill to all mankind. Though they were educated in different universities, they have had their training in the Gandhian school of discipline and service. Again, is there no significance in the fact that while Mahatma Gandhi nominated Pandit Nehru as his successor, he gave his last words to Sardar Patel ?

## 16. LAST MEETING WITH SAPRU

The Sapru family in Allahabad, like the Nehru family, has been uniformly kind to me. No visit of mine to Allahabad would be complete without my calling on the Saprus. When I was touring with Sardar Patel towards the end of November 1948, I called on Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru just to pay my respects and enquire after his health. It was Sunday the 27th November in the morning while he was sipping his soup. He looked fresh in the face but from neck downwards he was paralysed and out of action. His tongue faltered but his brain was functioning coherently, judging from his questions and remarks.

Though not in constant touch with the day-to-day problems of government, Sir Tej had a comprehensive grasp of the difficulties of the Governments at the Centre and in the provinces. He wondered why some of the provincial Governments were not kept under closer observation by the Centre. In his opinion, Ministries in some provinces were weak and also corrupt. He asked who the next Commander-in-Chief would be and before I could even mention the gossip as it was in Delhi at the time, Sir Tej expressed the hope that the Government of India would appoint the seniormost Indian—General Cariappa. At the same time, he referred with

gratitude to the achievements of General Thimayya in Kashmir and said : "Indian Generals of this type should be encouraged to occupy even higher posts." He then left the Government and the Kashmir campaign and jumped to the then impending execution of General Tojo. This struck me as rather remarkable, and he spoke rather excitedly ; the nurse attending on him was watching keenly. To quote Sir Tej Bahadur's own words: "Under what international law can the decision to execute General Tojo be defended ? In my opinion he is no more guilty of any war crime than Churchill or Stalin. When the question of the trial of Hitler was under consideration, it was discussed at length by the Jurists of Europe who by a large majority held that he could not be tried for what he had done. It was later discussed by Jurists in America who also found that no trial was possible. I have a book in my library from which I can cite quotations against such trials. General Tojo should not have been tried ; at any rate, there should be no execution. But I find from the newspapers that General Tojo is to be executed in a few days. I wonder why there is no stirring of conscience in the international world of today."

Sir Tej asked me a few other questions and even on his death-bed, he was intellectually most alive. I met also A. N. Sapru and P. N. Sapru. The former was still suffering from paralysis though he was able to function as Education Secretary in the U. P. Government. As for P. N. Sapru, he appeared to resent the restraint imposed on him by the judgeship of the High Court. Twice he remarked : "I feel like jumping off the Bench in order to be a member of the Constituent Assembly in Delhi."

## 17. THE A.I.N.E.C.

There are several aspects connected with the growth



of my profession during the last 35 years but as they need detailed treatment I shall not burden the present volume. I shall, however, refer briefly to the most recent and outstanding event—the genesis and growth of the All-India Newspaper Editors Conference. There was sufficient provocation in 1920, after the end of the First World War, for the Indian newspaper editors to have formed themselves into such an organization. That opportunity was not availed of. Then again, a few years later, when the Princes Protection Bill was introduced and later still when the Contempt of Courts Bill as well as the Press Emergency Powers Bill were placed on the Statute Book, there was need for the Press to have organized itself in order to challenge the encroachments on its limited sphere of freedom. But again a policy of drift was adopted, professional jealousy being of course one of the causes. But a year after the Second World War began, in October 1940, the Government of India had to deal with the first symptoms of the civil disobedience movement revived by Mahatma Gandhi as part of the freedom movement in India. Under cover of the Defence of India Rules the Government declared a ban on the publication of any matter which, in their opinion, was likely to impede the war-effort. This was a death-knell to the Press; and even the editorial worms now turned. A call by a few leading editors headed by Kasturi Srinivasan of the *Hindu* and Devadas Gandhi of the *Hindustan Times* and there was a wonderful rally, the like of which had not been seen before. Editors of practically all the newspapers including those of the Anglo-Indian section, as also those of weeklies and monthlies, scurried to Delhi anxious to know what fate was in store for the Press in India during the War. For the first time the British Government in India felt the power of the Press which could combine and present a united front. They, therefore, came to terms with the editors on the basis of the latter not hampering war-effort but exercising their own sense of

responsibility, the situation to be reviewed every second month or so by a Standing Committee of the Conference as an all-India consultative body, while a machinery was set up in Delhi in the form of a Central Press Advisory Committee which was to be consulted by the Delhi administration. I was elected a member of both the Standing Committee and the Central Press Advisory Committee, the former for a period of two years and the latter for six years. The problems posed during these years amongst the editors and by the Government before the Central Press Advisory Committee almost week after week were problems in the disposal of which there had to be considerable give and take on both sides if for no other reason than to see that during the war years at any rate there was no break-down of the Press, particularly as the Governments in the provinces were being run, without popular Ministries and Legislatures, under Section 93 of the Government of India Act.

There are a few outstanding impressions of the A.I.N.E.C during the first three years of its working which were attended with teething troubles. Firstly, the refusal of Mahadev Desai as editor of 'Harijan' to submit to the censorship of Mahatma Gandhi's statements followed by his advice to the editors that they should as a body either not submit to that censorship or close down the papers. Of course this was a counsel of despair, and editors with business at stake and with responsibility towards their own clients preferred to view the problem from a professional angle divorced from all political considerations. Secondly, there was sharp difference of opinion over the situation posed by the Central Provinces Government which had banned the publication of all news relating to the fast undertaken by Professor Bhansali over the misbehaviour of troops at Chimur. There was an animated debate and eventually the Standing Committee decided upon applying sanctions, because even the

Government of India were inclined to look with indifference at the policy adopted by the Government of the Central Provinces. The advice tendered earlier by B. G. Horniman, namely black-out of Government news, was echoed and re-echoed with the result that for once even the sedate body of editors led by the mild and co-operating Kasturi Srinivasan felt compelled to decide upon non-publication of the Honours List and of speeches of members of the British Government and of the Government of India. It was not an empty threat but a decision enforced much to the annoyance of the Government of those days. But the Anglo-Indian newspapers practically did not fall in line with it. They held a different view of "political fasts"; at any rate, Mr Stephens, the Editor of the *Statesman*, publicly dissented from it at one of the subsequent meetings of the Standing Committee of the Editors Conference held in Delhi in February 1943, with reference to Mahatma Gandhi's fast. Previously the same newspaper under the editorship of Mr Arthur Moore used to publish news of the civil disobedience movement of the National Congress under the heading "Cranks Corner". Though the view-points of the British and the Indian editors differed on such political issues, there was more or less a team spirit exhibited on other matters discussed by the editors, the credit for which goes to Mr Kasturi Srinivasan.

When the Second World War ended and the Defence of India Act was withdrawn, the Press in India heaved a sigh of relief. But the six years I was associated with the Conference, whether in the Standing Committee or in the Central Press Advisory Committee, were years of professional education, as they gave me an insight into the manifold problems of editors, problems concerning not only the profession *inter se* but also concerning their relations with the Government. This special study was helpful to me in the three years of my service in the Government of India as Principal Informa-

tion Officer when I had to deal with the same body of editors and when I had to offer my advice to the Government regarding their many problems. Luckily the war baby of the Editors Conference survived the War. But after the World War there was a new type of war started internally within the country in the form of communal clashes. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as Minister in charge of Information addressed the Standing Committee of the Editors Conference held in Delhi in November 1946. He alluded, in particular, to the writings of *Dawn* which stirred up communal troubles and were responsible for the communal temper in the country, and said: "If the Government have not taken any action against *Dawn* or any other paper so far, it is because we feel it necessary that we should give latitude even to *Dawn*. But we in the Government feel that the present law is ineffective to deal with the situation." No hurried decision was taken; after a few months of patience and after further consultation with the provincial Governments and again after sounding the editors, an ordinance was published whereby Government assumed powers to prohibit the publication of any newspaper by ordering its suspension for limited periods of time. I know how distasteful such a decision was to the Home Minister in the Government of India, for indeed only a few months before Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had agreed to appoint a Committee to revise the Press laws in the country in order to bring them in line with those of other countries. But an acute phase of communal warfare had to be treated by special legislation.

Even this phase passed, and after partition and the opting out of the Pakistani section of Muslim-owned newspapers we thought that there was an end of the trouble. But the communal virus was kept alive and from Lahore and Karachi, *Zamindar*, the *Inquilab*, *Dawn* and other papers maintained a regular series of attacks on the Government and the people of India not for anything that had happened but

for what they imagined had happened. Stories were fabricated in quick succession by these newspapers in Pakistan to make it appear that Muslims in Delhi were being killed in thousands upon thousands and that Muslim blood was flowing along Ballimaran and Jumma Musjid into the Jumna. Such stories of genocide published in the Pakistan papers under very tendentious headlines were yet circulating within India, even in Delhi. As Principal Information Officer I had to draw the attention of the Government of India to this menace to the inter-dominion relationship. Later, a Press-note was issued explaining how the stories were fabricated and went round a chain of newspapers between Lahore and Karachi. The Government of Pakistan gave a reply which was universally described as anaemic and unconvincing. Fortunately as a result of the frequent meetings between the representatives of India and of Pakistan, better relationship was established, so that when I happened to visit Karachi early in 1949 with the Government of India Delegation headed by Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, a reception was given in my honour attended by the pressmen of Karachi and good feelings were manifested.

## 18. SOME PRESS GALLERY MEMORIES

Elsewhere I have dealt with the Press gallery in the Indian National Congress as well as the All-India Congress Committee and the manner in which pressmen are given admittance to them. There is accommodation enough in such bodies held either in the open or under a shamiana. But not so in the case of the Parliament or any other legislative body which holds sessions in particular chambers, with limited accommodation for members of the Press and the public. And the Parliament is bound to grow in size as well as in importance along with the growth of democracy.

The demand from newspapers for admittance into the Press gallery which had been steadily on the increase during the last thirty years, will become even more clamant and extensive. The Press gallery indeed occupies a pride of place in the set-up of the Parliament House, for those in the Chamber who legislate for the welfare of the millions look to the men in the gallery for support, while from the public gallery the common man views those in the Press gallery as his watch-dogs and expects keen and zealous service at all times.

In 1919 when I first visited the old Imperial Legislative Council which used to be presided over by the Viceroy, the Press gallery was a tiny little corner capable of accommodating not more than 15 persons, most of whom were representatives of news agencies of the time and a few Anglo-Indian newspapers. Today the Indian Parliament has a seating space in the gallery for about 75 journalists representing not only news agencies in India but agencies of foreign countries and again not merely newspapers conducted in English but those in Indian languages.

The Indian Parliament is expanding in its representative capacity and all the Indian States have also been merged and brought within its scope. Therefore, instead of the 75 seats now made available there may have to be more than double the number. When the present building was under construction, K. C. Roy, the Doyen of the profession and the founder of the Associated Press, was consulted for advice and he in turn consulted me and other colleagues. Our advice was followed in the construction of the Press gallery. It was in the time of Sir Shanmukham Chetty that a committee was constituted to advise the Speaker in regard to the admission to the Press gallery as well as meeting the requirements of pressmen in general. This committee has undergone several changes in its composition and status. While it is a body not elected by those who frequent the Press gallery but

nominated by the Speaker, still it has included those with some experience of the profession. Even when the committee has been nominated for the purpose of consultation, it is not in all cases that its advice is sought but only on those matters on which the Speaker feels that consultation is desirable or necessary.

The relations between the Press Gallery Committee and the Speaker are yet to be fully developed and firmly established. Perhaps, in a reconstituted Parliament under the new Act, such a relationship might grow and become established through conventions as in the big parliaments of other free countries. It is largely a question of the way in which journalists themselves organize for their own needs and the response that they get from the Speaker. While Sir Shanmukham Chetty set up a committee in his time, his successor Sir Abdur Rahim was very different. His attitude was reflected in his relations with the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta which had criticized one of his rulings and also published certain items of news. There was correspondence between Sir Abdur Rahim and the Editor of the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* which did not elicit a suitable response and the result was that the privilege of admission to the Press gallery given to the correspondent (Mr Roy) was withdrawn. Sir Abdur Rahim held the Speakership for ten years, the longest term on record, and therefore the punishment inflicted on the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* by the withdrawal of the Press gallery privilege to its correspondent was also the longest on record—from 1936 to 1946.

Formerly in the time of the late Vithalbhai Patel as the first Indian elected Speaker, there were two incidents between him and the Press gallery. The correspondents concerned were A. H. Byrt representing the *Times of India* and C. M. Rice representing the *Daily Telegraph*, London. Byrt frankly did not like the politics of Vithalbhai Patel and when

he was engaged on a tour in India, this correspondent happened to publish in his paper that the "Speaker was gadding about the country at India's taxpayers' cost." This remark was resented by Speaker Patel who expelled him from the gallery until an apology was tendered by the paper. In the case of the *Daily Telegraph*, the paper did not care to express its regret and therefore there was an end of the matter.

The tussle between Sir Abdur Rahim and the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* lasted over ten years. Several attempts were made by the leading members of the Press Gallery Committee as well as the Press Association of Delhi including myself to smoothen out matters, but each time we failed. It had become a matter of prestige on both sides—the one on the ground that he was the Speaker of India's Parliament whose rulings should not be questioned and the other because it was the oldest Indian newspaper and had a right to criticize. Once Sir Abdur Rahim relented and agreed to receive and hear a few leading journalists. But that very day the paper happened to publish something inconvenient in relation to the travelling bills of Sir Abdur Rahim and the remarks of the Accountant General thereon which completely upset him, with the result that we ourselves thought it wise to put off our request. It was when Mr Mavlankar (a Congressman) was elected Speaker, much to the chagrin of Mr Jinnah who had backed Sir Cowasji Jehangir, that the *Patrika* Representative was re-admitted to the press gallery. Even for contempt of Court the punishment provided has some limited application as regards time ; but in the case of contempt of the Speaker-ship of Parliament the punishment seems to be unlimited. What convention should be created in order to limit such punishment is a matter which the Conference of Speakers might usefully consider.



## 19. DOPES AND ANTI-DOTES

I wonder how many in India have seen a lobby in the Central Assembly in India or of parliaments elsewhere. Their number must, indeed, be very small, for the privilege of entering a parliamentary lobby is extended only to the past members, besides the present, and to a few selected members of the Press. I have had this privilege given to me early in my career as journalist and I hope that, in what I am going to say, I am not running the risk of losing such a valued privilege.

I have seen the lobbies not only of the Central Legislature but of several provincial Chambers in India. I have also had the good fortune to be admitted into the lobbies of the House of Commons, the Irish Dail and Irish Senate and the French Assembly Diet. They are all the same everywhere. In India, the difficulty in securing admission to the lobbies of the Central Assembly is, perhaps, greater than in the provincial Chambers. To anyone interested in politics, the lobby of the Central Assembly is the most interesting place for observation. When the Indian Central Assembly was in Old Delhi, prior to its shifting to the Council House in New Delhi, there was no such thing as a lobby, clearly marked; and in those spacious days, admission was not so difficult either. But today the lobbies in the Council House in New Delhi are a much-coveted place for journalists and politicians alike and therefore somewhat difficult of access.

### The Green-Room Atmosphere

Any one entering the lobby for the first time might get the impression that the people there waste time or merely relax from the boredom of the Chamber itself. But that would be a very erroneous impression to form. For, even

if some few persons might be anxious to relax, the atmosphere would not permit them to do so for long. The atmosphere is generally one of the green-room before the stage of the open Chamber. As you know, the business of the Legislature in India, as elsewhere, is transacted now-a-days more in committees and in the lobbies than in the open Chamber. While, therefore, the speeches in the Chamber are like those at a shareholders' meeting, the talks in the lobbies often savour of the market-place. The lobby is the one place for the legislators to retire to for adjustment of differences over any formula or for even agreeing to differ in the end. A fresh development arises in the course of a discussion in the Chamber on any particular proposal ; that leads to emergent consultations among party leaders and Government spokesmen and these are better held in the less conventional air of the lobbies. The lobby is, therefore, the scene of confabulations, as much on matters relating to the measures on the anvil in the legislature as on other topics. So long as the party system of parliamentary government continues and there is freedom of speech, there is scope enough for all the divergent elements to express their different points of view. The greater the controversy on any piece of legislation, the more lively the talks in the lobbies tend to become. There are clashes as much between ideologies as between personalities, and there are idiosyncracies and personal angularities, all of which require to be adjusted for the sake of harmony and agreement. Whether the Legislature is a true index of the politics in the country outside or not, the lobby is surely a true index of the Legislature to which it is attached.

In the circumstances, a journalist with his ears and eyes open and with a "nose for news" finds much better material in the lobby than even in the regular proceedings of the House. While from the gallery one can hear only the set speeches on somewhat preconceived lines of attack or defence, the lobbies are full of negotiations and adjustments. What

matters here is not eloquence or debating skill but a knowledge of your own strength—strength of fact, strength of conviction and the strength of votes behind you, and more than all these, the strength of reasonableness and the desire to do the greatest good to the greatest number. Any one who displays these qualities commands the votes in the division lobbies which are situated at the wings of the discussion lobbies. Indeed, while speeches in the Chamber are intended to win the votes of individuals, the negotiations or talks in the lobbies are aimed at securing the support of parties and groups.

I think I have said enough to show that the lobbies provide dope which no journalist and no politician whether belonging to the Legislature or not, can afford to miss if he really wants to serve the public cause. Any rate, the journalist in the lobby sees more of the game than those who are in the arena. I can assure you that they do not dupe themselves by the dope they receive in the course of their excursions in the lobby; for every little bit of news obtained in the lobby is scrutinized and verified before the story itself is flashed across for the Press. Sometimes very honest differences of opinion will persist round certain measures, permitting of no compromise whatsoever, such as I had occasion to witness over the Rupee Ratio and the Companies Act (Amendment) Bill. On such occasions, the scenes in the lobbies provide dope of exceptional interest to the special correspondents for their respective newspapers more than in ordinary times.

### Hunting up a Story

However, the journalist in the lobby, while he is gliding his way through its shifting scenes and into the hearts of its whispers, is also sought after by party whips or secretaries.

For, quite often he is trusted more than the rival party secretary or whip for information as to the voting strength expected on particular occasions. The journalist, from his close contacts with various parties, not to speak of his constant observation and analysis of the currents and cross-currents in the lobbies and even at the residences of members, is expected to possess a fair measure of judgement as to the relative strength of various parties in the division lobbies. In the Central Legislature under the old regime, where the Government was in a position to dominate as well as determine the policy, the lobby often provided antidotes to the dope. Suppose a story was current among the non-official members that over the Rupee Ratio an agreement had been reached which was to meet with the approval of Government after a formal meeting of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The story might have emanated from an interested source which had its eye immediately on the money market in Bombay or Calcutta. The journalist does not rush to the Press with the story. He gets into the official side of the lobby and after some diligent enquiries gets to know the correct hang of it. Thereupon, he either lets out a cautiously worded pointer or waits for further developments. The journalist who allows himself to be tripped on such matters will have rendered the greatest disservice to the public, because anything concerning exchange or even remotely affecting the money market or the share market must be reported with more than ordinary caution and prudence. And I venture to suggest that the record of the journalists in the Indian Legislature in this respect is one of which both the Government and the public can well be proud.

### **The Tricks of the Trade**

Now for another sample of dope. A non-official member

had dinner with someone belonging to the Treasury Bench and gathered in the course of the conversation the impression that the Government would be dropping the entire legislation that was on the anvil because of the relentless attitude of the Opposition. That would provide the basis for a very exhilarating news story in the lobby next day, and it might quickly go round. But could the journalist make himself responsible for publishing even as lobby rumour such a post-prandial impression? So what the journalist does is to approach the Government member concerned either in the lobby or in his office room and bring him round to discuss the subject and then through some discreetly-worded questions intended to elicit the real point, assess the accuracy or otherwise of the rumour. The reaction noticeable on the face of the official, apart from what he might say, often gives the correct clue. This is how dope obtained in the lobby is provided with its proper antidote before the journalist ventures to make himself responsible for its publication.

So much for the lobby talks as concerning the proposals between the Government and the Legislature. But what of the Parties themselves? Subjects like the Ottawa Trade Agreement come under discussion. The main Opposition Party decides and announces a particular attitude—perhaps to support some of the proposals and reject the rest. But what is the next Opposition Party in the Chamber—whose votes will decide the issue—going to do? That party meets just half an hour before the Assembly itself meets for the day to take a vote. The lobby is, therefore, full of interesting speculations and businessmen among the members are found to be briskly on the move influencing, coaxing and even cajoling their colleagues according to their respective points of view. There is the small industry, there is the handloom weaver against the industrialist, and there is also the cotton grower who has friends in the Chamber and, above all, there are importers and exporters. Thus

every party or individual is busy in protecting and promoting its or his own interest. All India is waiting for a forecast. And trunk telephone calls from Bombay and Calcutta show the great anxiety of the share markets there. The task of the journalist is not easy ; his paper wants a flash for the after-lunch edition ; and he will be a poor journalist if he does not forecast, and forecast accurately. But then, what is to be the attitude of the leader of the second Opposition Party which is yet to decide only after hearing the first Opposition Leader ? The lobby is thus being tantalized ; the Chamber itself is uncertain. But, lo and behold ! A prominent member of the second Opposition Party walks along, with an air of superior wisdom, and whispers into the ear of a Government member, and, thereupon, the official whip goes about with an easier feeling in the lobby. Long before all these developments are noticed, the flash message had gone to the newspapers in the country. And, invariably, these messages circulated by responsible journalists are not mere anticipations but are based on an elaborate study of the currents and cross-currents in the lobbies—not to speak of the men and their politics.

Now for the lobby talks concerning the politics of a party *inter se*. There may be an important proposal which the Government would like to press forward as the first instalment of a much-delayed social or economic reform. It may happen that the acceptance of the proposal as framed would mean the incurring by the Opposition Party of the displeasure of the High Command outside, which controls it. The Leader of the High Command may say : "Either the whole loaf or none at all." But, in the opinion of the Leader of the party in Opposition, the measure is one which should not be risked. Therefore, anxious days with hectic correspondence and a last-minute instruction for a specific modification in the proposal. But what is that instruction ? Will the Government go so far as that ? Such questions perplex the members

of the party concerned. And the talks in the lobby throw several side-lights on the political differences among its members. But who has the secret to tell? The Chief Whip of that party gives the clue. Now confirmation is needed.

If the Leader is not available, the Deputy Leader can give it. And, if any doubt as to the fate of the measure were entertained, the Leader of the House dispels it by an apposite remark.

I have said enough, I think, to show that if there is dope in the legislative lobbies, there are also antidotes immediately available, and that, at any rate, the journalists rarely, if ever, go wrong. On the other hand, who can forget the incident, duly reported several years ago, in the Assembly building at Simla over the Sarda Bill when a Sanatanist member of the Swaraj Party was literally "doped" with opium-mixed *pan* as a result of which he was physically unable to take part in the important proceedings of that day?\*

## 20. SIR C. P. RAMASWAMI IYER

One of the dazzling personalities of Indian public life during the last three decades and more is Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. There is much legendary lore about him. His practice at the Bar, his gifts of speech and writing, his knowledge of Sanskrit and French, besides English and Tamil, his indispensableness in Lord Willingdon's Government in Madras, and later for some time in Delhi, his long association with Travancore and its administration where he had introduced numerous reforms—are all well known. I refer here only to a few of the reminiscences connecting us both. It was in 1916-17 when he was having a roaring practice as an advocate in the Madras High Court, particularly before Justice Coutts-Trotter, that he made the first impression on me

\* Broadcast from A. I. R. Simla, 1940

during my conversations with him in two very important cases that he won and which I had to report for the newspapers. What he did as member of the Executive Council at Madras in the time of Lord Willingdon is a matter of history. The Pycara Electric Scheme from the Mettur Dam was an achievement solely to his credit, as he had to conquer prejudiced opposition and certain obstructive tactics. In the autumn of 1948, when I visited Ootacamund in connexion with the ECAFFE Conference session, and went over the Pycara area where electricity is generated, feeding the mills in the south, making Coimbatore the Lancashire of South India and supplying both energy and light at several other centres, I marvelled not so much at the ability of Sir Ramaswami Iyer in conceiving and completing the scheme as at the temerity of those who had thought fit to oppose him in and outside the Government.

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer is a good newsman. Whenever he used to visit Delhi or Simla, in some capacity or other, there was invariably a meeting between us, for while he wanted to know all about the happenings in the Capital, I was keen on gathering the 'green room' developments of political scenes with which he was either connected or of which he somehow kept himself informed. This bond has continued right through the years.

In 1931, apart from his desire to see me nominated a member of the Central Assembly on the death of K. C. Roy, he was of considerable assistance in helping Lord Willingdon to despatch Mahatma Gandhi to the second Round Table Conference. How I covered this news for Reuters, taking risks when practically the whole of Simla, including the Viceroy's House, had given up hope, is related elsewhere. But in checking up my other news with the developments of that week Sir C. P. Ramaswami was of enormous assistance to me.



Ten years later, when Sir C. P. was appointed member of the expanded Executive Council in succession to Sir Akbar Hydari (Sr.) with the Information portfolio, he arrived from Madras by the Grand Trunk Express a few minutes after 10 a.m. He was dressed ready to go and take oath. He said he was dashing off to the Viceroy's house to attend a meeting of the Executive Council. I suggested to him that it being Friday, the 'Rahukalam' was between 10-30 a.m. and 12 noon and so he had better postpone his oath-taking till afternoon. He just smiled, perhaps dismissing me as too superstitious, and dashed off. His was the shortest career as member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, for it lasted altogether 18 days, of which 2 days had been spent in travelling from Madras to Delhi. He can state with greater authority all that happened during that fortnight in Delhi. The War was going against the Allies, the Press had to stand by the Government. Hence there was censorship of the Press—a strict censorship of all the news before anything could be published! It was a horrible decision, promulgated as it had been in an Ordinance by the Home Department, of course in consultation with the Legislative Department. And poor Sir C. P. was asked to call the Press and explain the intentions. He is a lawyer and tried to be explanatory, but it was clear that his heart was not in the job. He was staying temporarily at the bungalow allotted to Sir B. L. Mitter, the Advocate-General of India, on the Race Course Road. I used to see him fairly frequently, but found him very unhappy. He would not disclose the secret, until after he had resigned and the resignation had been accepted.

It was 6 in the evening when he rang me up to see him and he gave the news in the form of a statement which he issued with reference to Mahatma Gandhi's views that had appeared in the *Times of India* about the role of the Princes and how he proposed to take up the cause of the Princely

Order. We know what he did—or rather how he overdid it.

The overdoing was in respect of accession of states to the Indian Union. From Trivandrum he was keeping up a barrage of criticism of the Congress leaders' utterances, relying on the statements made by Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence and Listowel in order to make out that the states could be 'independent' after the lapse of Paramountcy and that it was open to an independent state to enter into negotiations with any part of India for its future relations. This was contested by eminent jurists like Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer and administrators like Gopalaswami Ayyangar, who were supported by Ambedkar on the ground that the independence of Indian states could not be worth five years' purchase. Simultaneously, Jinnah, evidently on the advice of Zafrullah Khan, who was then the Adviser on constitutional matters to the Nawab of Bhopal, issued a statement that it was open to the states to join any part of India. Then Gandhiji in his prayer speeches, without going into the legality or the constitutional aspect, urged the Princes to join the Indian Union or Pakistan as they chose, and said that in any case the sovereignty which lapsed with the withdrawal of the British would automatically vest in the people and not in the Rulers. Sir C. P. Ramaswami came to Delhi and stayed in Travancore House a few days later. The Nawab of Bhopal was also in Delhi, while Sir Walter Monckton was adviser to the Nawab of Chhattari who was Premier of Hyderabad State. When I went to see Sir C. P., I found him in a state of unhappiness. For he had lots to say, but very few to listen to it.

It was in this week that I learnt that Sir C. P. had written a letter to Mr Attlee, Premier of Britain, pointing out how during the War the Princes had supported the British while the Congress had opposed them and how the attitude of the British Government in giving power to the Congress, completely ignoring the Princes, amounted to leaving the Princely

Order friendless. Mr Attlee communicated the substance of this letter to Lord Mountbatten and asked him to send for Sir C. P. and have a talk with him. Sir C. P. had an interview with Lord Mountbatten. Sardar Patel got scent of it and there was an exchange of letters.

Sardar Patel wrote to Sir C. P. :

“My dear Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer,

It is my nature to be a friend of the friendless. You have become so by choice, and I shall be glad if you will come and have lunch with me tomorrow at 1 p.m. Hope you are doing very well.”

Sir C. P. replied :

“My dear Sardar Patel,

I appreciate your letter and the kindly thought underlying it. It however happens that the ‘friendless’ person referred to has an engagement with a friend for lunch today and he cannot avail himself of your generous invitation.

Hoping for better luck later on and renewing my thanks for the friendliness displayed by you.”

There was some delay in Travancore acceding to the Indian Union, while Cochin like Baroda had done it earlier. He was very restless in those days ; and one day when he had addressed a public meeting explaining his views on the question of accession and was coming out, an assailant inflicted injuries on his face as a result of which he was in hospital for several days. About a week after the incident, Travancore acceded to the Indian Union. After his recovery he visited Delhi and this time he was the guest of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at No. 1, Aurangzeb Road. When I called on him, he explained his itenerary in America. That trip has done him enormous good, for he has come back with little or no trace of the injuries inflicted by the assailant and looking even younger. As President of the Ootacamund Club he

gave a party in honour of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the time of the ECAFE Conference. It was one of the largest ever seen at Ootacamund and also the gayest. Except for occasional visits to Madras, Sir C. P. has remained in Ootacamund wasting his 'sweetness' on the mountain air.

## 21. THE TRAGEDY OF "SUPPLE-MURTI"

### The Terror of Council House

#### PALANQUIN BEARER OF CONGRESS

4th April 1943

Satyamurti's soul has gone to its rest. It has served its long term of hard labour. Many have been the tributes paid to his memory—as politician, parliamentarian, city father, educationist, lover of art. Indeed, the story of his public life is an inspiration, a lesson, and a warning. He crowded into the short space of his career the energies of a century, and has gone before his time. I have watched him all through his public life from several vantage points, just as I have watched several others who bestride India's political stage. But never have I come across a personality more earnest, more devoted, more loyal, or more selfless than Satyamurti. A man of amazing industry and dazzling brilliance, Satyamurti died in action. He died in the service of his country. He worked himself to death.

Here is a cross-section of his life as he lived it in Delhi and Simla. The dry climate of these places suited his health, which improved visibly whenever he came to these abodes of the Government of India. But he always came only on public work. His daily engagement list consisted at least of 10 items. Some of them he could have avoided, but he could not say 'NO' to anyone who approached him. In the morning,

he would be issuing a statement or giving half a dozen interviews before he rushed to the Assembly. He has never been late in the House even by a minute. He would shake the Treasury Benches with his searching interpellations one full hour, and follow it up with a fighting speech on the most controversial themes. And when the Assembly adjourned for lunch, he would have a frugal fare of coffee and toast, never missing his *pan* after. Soon he would be surrounded by his colleagues and friends, and by pressmen. With all of them he would justify the virulence of his attack on the Government. Incidentally, he would pick up from the Assembly library half a dozen ponderous books, mark them and flag them with the ease born of a perfect mastery over his subject. These flags and marks were the terror of the Treasury Benches, for they supplied Satyamurti with fresh facts and figures for his post-lunch offensive. At 5 p.m. his car would be ready to take him to a public function, unless his Party meeting required his presence in the Council Chamber. Sometimes he would attend even both. On the public platform, he would make a splendid speech—an extension of that delivered in the Assembly earlier in the day. At night when he went home, a crowd of people would be waiting to see him, anxious to secure his powerful support for their respective causes. Tired, jaded and hardly able to speak, Satyamurti would accept all their briefs, because he was Satyamurti ! He would try to retire somewhat early at night, but wake up in the small hours of the morning and skip over twenty volumes and gather the gale for the day's sail. Such in brief was his daily routine as a Legislator. And the result ? Nature warned him several times during the last few years. But he heeded them not. He would never disobey the call of duty.

### A Marathon Performance

Look into the pages of the Indian Hansard and you have the overwhelming testimony to Satyamurti's unexampled record of public service. His questions and his supplementaries puzzled the British Government. They were the despair of the bureaucracy and the terror of the Government members. It was he and he alone who kept the entire Secretariat of the Government of India working for months together. The entire Secretariat was occupied with not what the Assembly would ask, but what Satyamurti would interpellate. To the Government of India and its Secretariat, he was not Satyamurti but "Supple-murti".

When he first came to the Central Assembly after defeating Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar in 1935, he showed me a series of bills for repealing what were then known as the infamous Black Act. His speech on these bills was a Marathon performance. It lasted two days. Even as a feat of sheer physical endurance, it is unexampled in Indian political life. As a feat of parliamentary eloquence, skill and debate, it has few equals. Every word of that speech was an indictment of British rule, a demand for National Government and a plea for freedom. He often told me that the Central Assembly, like other legislative forums, should never be deserted. Even if you could not wrest freedom through the Assembly, by the liberty of speech in the House you could at least bring down the prestige of the British Government. By liberty of speech, you could expose the tin-gods of bureaucracy. That was the first phase of our struggle for freedom. That was why he made the Congress give up its policy of boycotting the Legislatures, and he himself chose to contest the election from the city of Madras which he served so well and with such distinction.

**Foil And Counterfoil**

If there was anything Machiavellian in the politics of the late V. J. Patel, whether as legislator or as President of the Assembly, there was no such odour in the politics of Satyamurti. He placed all his cards on the table. His armoury was his facts and figures. No member of Government, no Secretary of its Departments, dared question Satyamurti's facts. Herein lay his exceptional strength as a parliamentarian. Sometimes, his flint required steel. His foil required a counterfoil. These he found in Sir James Grigg and Sir N. N. Sircar. The latter tried to muzzle Satyamurti and invented a rule that no member could put down more than five questions a day for oral answers from Government. But no sooner than Congress returned to the Assembly than Satyamurti was up with his supplementaries—supplementaries to the answers to questions put by other members !

But Satyamurti rendered more signal service to his country in a sphere which was not open to public gaze. His work in the Public Accounts Committee will always be remembered as a model to the students of public finance. The Public Accounts Committee, which is a statutory body, is the only place where the elected representatives of the people can exercise vigilance over the spending of their money. Satyamurti's grasp of details and his devotion to the popular cause found ample opportunities of expression in the Public Accounts Committee where he turned his artillery on every Department of Government at close range. He read and mastered all the literature supplied to the members of the Committee, not excluding even the reports of the Meteorological Department. He had always a suspicion that there was excess of expenditure on the military side. I have had opportunities of watching the proceedings of this Committee when they were open to the Press. A. Rangaswamy Iyengar, K. C. Roy, K. C. Neogy and other stalwarts had hurried the

discussions of the Committee and enhanced its importance by their labours. But it was the unique glory of Satyamurti that he was able to monopolize the attention of every Department of Government by his criticism and his cross-questions. There have been instances when Finance Members have accepted defeat at the hands of Satyamurti. There have been instances when Secretaries have taken leave to escape the fire of Satyamurti !

### **Ever a Palanquin Bearer**

While Delhi and Simla resound with his parliamentary renown, his work as a Congressman was done in his own Province of Madras. He fought every inch at every session of the Congress for his point of view, and whenever he lost the day, as a loyal Congressman he abided by the verdict, hoping for better luck next time. The highest honours of the Congress never came to him. He was never even a member of the Congress Working Committee. In Madras, it was only after a quarter of a century's record of service that the local Congressmen allowed him to become the President of the Provincial Congress. Other men had to be preferred for other reasons—other men with far less ability and still less claims than Satyamurti !

I remember with what feelings he came, after his election, to a tea party that I was giving that evening. "Better late than never," he said ruefully. Several years later when he came to the Central Assembly, and was chosen only as the Secretary of the Congress Party, he remarked : "Well, my friend, it seems I am to be the palanquin bearer all my life." But Pandit Pant was soon called to the U. P. to become its Premier, and the post of deputy-leadership came to Satyamurti. As Deputy Leader, he had endless worries with Bhulabhai Desai who believed in other ways and other



methods of destroying the prestige of the British Government and had followed them all his life. Bhulabhai Desai believed in majestic orations and rolling periods. Such differences in outlook do not ensure the harmony of party politics, much less can such a party function successfully as His Majesty's Opposition. There were numerous instances when friction occurred but there is no need to refer to them in detail.

### 36,000 Miles of Electioneering

To return to South India where Satyamurti lived and died. I was with him on that historic day when the Congress was to launch on its campaign of capturing the provincial Legislatures. The Columbia Recording Company came and recorded his voice, giving the message of the Congress, ending with "Bande Mataram." This record was the chief cause of the success of many other Congressmen who used it in their electioneering campaign. He himself planned the whole campaign throughout the night. Some thirty Congressmen were with him. Then next morning he went out with them, and for days on end he was doing nothing but speaking. He covered 36,000 miles in South India and gave the Congress the great majority of 175 out of the 225 seats in the Madras Assembly.

He worked as no other man did for this sweeping success. But he did not himself get elected. He withdrew in favour of Rajagopalachari. People were heard to remark: "Satyamurti made the bed, but Rajagopalachari lay on it." I believe that Satyamurti never rose to greater heights than when he did this unparalleled act of self-effacement. He gave no greater lie to his traducers and critics who thought that Satyamurti was after office. He never held office even for a single minute, either under the Congress or under the bureaucracy, though others have gone in and tasted the fruits of office.

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When Sir Stafford Cripps was in Delhi in 1942 I had occasion to discuss the Cripps scheme with Satyamurti. And I remember with what feelings of regret he used to comment on the behaviour of some Congressmen who had lost themselves for 18 days, and even went to the extent of parading the fact of 75 per cent acceptance of the scheme by Congress. Satyamurti for his part told me that without transfer of Defence, either during the war or after it, there could be no freedom or transfer of power.

Satyamurti had a mania for issuing statements. As a Congressman he would not attend the Assembly to hear the Viceroy addressing the House. But immediately he would take hold of a copy of the Viceroy's speech and issue a statement on it !

### No Bank Balance

But for all his labours for his Party and for his country, Satyamurti got nothing but garlands and applause. The garlands have withered. The applause has died down. He was never given the place that he deserved and desired. He was kept out on all such occasions. He was a lover of the good things of life, and he loved to live well. But he had to live in poverty all his life. He had even to take to journalism, in order that he might work as a politician. To his friends he often used to say : "For success in politics, one must have a good bank balance." He suffered because he had no bank balance.\*

## CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters I have given but a few of the outstanding reminiscences and some of my recollections or impressions formed in the course of my professional career extending over three decades. They relate mostly to political changes and professional matters. Limitations of space forbid reference to the changes that I have noticed in social and other walks of life. For the same reason I have not been able to mention the numerous other personalities whom it has been my privilege to contact—personalities who still wield enormous influence and prestige in the country and even abroad.

Politics in India since the withdrawal of British power have given politicians, generally speaking, a sobriety of outlook. Still there are certain sections who are unreconciled to the new order. Not a week has therefore passed when it has not been necessary for either the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister to exhort all to approach current problems in a spirit of introspection. Fortunately, among editors of newspapers as well as working journalists throughout the country—barring of course a few exceptions—there has been an appreciable evidence of both sobriety and responsibility. “Words have a magical effect” observed Pandit Nehru on his arrival in India from the Commonwealth Conference in 1949. In a similar strain he had spoken earlier in the Constituent Assembly of India, while explaining the objectives of our new Constitution. The responsibility for expression whether in the Press or in Parliament or on the platform is realized now more than ever in the past. Though a degree of restraint is being practised by publicists as well as politicians in an effort to ensure that discipline is the basis of service in new India, there are many regional problems, apart from economic, which are proving knotty and which require time for solution. As Sardar Patel stated on the

occasion of his 75th birthday—"until India is strong enough and until vigorous and healthy blood begins to flow in her veins, we should not put barricades against each other."

The responsibility devolving on the publicist is normally greater than even on the politician, for his words are printed in the public Press and have a more enduring effect on the minds of readers. In India particularly at the present juncture, that responsibility is even more onerous, because the new Constitution has given adult franchise at one jump to 160 millions of men and women and it is for the Press to tell the millions of voters who will participate in the elections which will be held in a year or two, and every five years thereafter, what their duties are and how to discharge them. The next few years have thus become important from the point of view of educating the electorate—a role which the Press, as the watch-dog of the public, has to discharge in this testing time of India's history. It is regrettable, therefore, that the Press of India has not got in the Constitution any specific provision for its freedom as is to be found, for instance, in the American Constitution. That eminent constitutional lawyer and politician, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, addressing the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference early in 1946, differed from the British point of view on the subject and said: "In a country like India where there are so many inequalities it is very necessary that the law makes provision for fundamental rights; and in the case of the Press which represents the views of the whole community there should be a guarantee given so that the party in power will not, on certain conceivable occasions, interfere with its liberty." The American Commission on the Freedom of the Press has explicitly laid down: "If freedom of the Press is to achieve a reality, Government must set limits upon its capacity to interfere with, regulate, control or suppress the voice of the Press." But the attempts of pressmen to obtain such a specific guarantee in India's new Constitution failed and they have to be content for the

present with a verbal assurance from the Minister for Information that "Freedom of Expression includes Freedom of the Press." Despite this initial handicap, the Press in India has shown and is daily showing signs of a helpful attitude towards working the Constitution by self-control and by prudent handling of national as well as international problems. Pressmen, particularly that large section who are constituents of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, have not only not embarrassed Government but in certain provinces or States have even put up with the pin-pricks of Ministers or officials. Fortunately, the High Courts have always come to the rescue of the aggrieved journalist. In the latest case, which was the first to be heard under the new Constitution, the Bombay High Court laid down, to the relief of the Press in India, that "the Press is entirely free to propagate any views provided they are not prohibited or are not likely to lead to a breach of the peace. Masses should be politically educated, they are entitled to know the 'pros' and 'cons' of every political system and ideology, and so long as it is legal for a particular party to put its views and principles before the people, it would be improper for the Court to interfere with the right not only of the party but also of the people." This judgement was with reference to an article in a Bombay newspaper containing Communist propaganda, and the High Court says: "Inasmuch as the Communist Party has not been banned by the Government, there is nothing in law to prevent the Communists from carrying on propaganda about their ideology as against that of the Socialists or the Congress." There may be other occasions when Courts will have similarly to come to the rescue of the journalist as against the inroads of the executive on his freedom to ventilate popular grievances or propagate political ideologies.

Under the new Constitution there are more powers with the Centre than with the States. No wonder in India's Capital where there was not a single newspaper till 1924 we now

have the largest number of newspapers and journals. Further, we have in Delhi the largest concentration of journalists representing newspapers and news agencies not only of India but of America, Britain, France, Russia, China, Indonesia, Australia and several other countries of the world. In these days of demand for free access to, and free flow of information, the Press has great opportunity but at the same time greater responsibility to the public. As Jefferson, the author of the American Declaration of Independence, remarked with reference to the specific provision in the American Constitution guaranteeing freedom of the Press, "newspapers should contrive to penetrate the whole mass of the people." This duty will have to be discharged much more by the newspapers printed in the regional languages than by those printed in English. Further, they must publicize the average man so that the social side of India is pictured correctly and rural India is not forgotten.

While the Press in India has to continue the agitation for its own freedom as in the American Constitution, we have the satisfaction that in President Rajendra Prasad we have one who is not only imbued with the spirit of the new Constitution over the framing of which he had himself presided, but is prompted by friendliness and impartiality. Though he has often fought shy of publicity, he has had a good Press. This was because he himself has been good and, possessing a humanistic outlook, has also rendered many humanitarian services. The newsmen represented by the Press Association and the Foreign Correspondents' Association at the Capital did well to entertain him when he became President. His attitude towards their work was revealed when he said: "So far as news is concerned, be perfectly honest. Do not mitigate or exaggerate but say the truth and nothing but the truth." From this wholesome principle no newsman who takes pride in his profession is likely to depart. But the pressmen have not only to purvey news but also views. And they have to

do it every day in this competitive age under conditions which not many administrators and Ministers are fully cognizant of. Hence clashes occur and the High Courts have to be approached for a verdict at enormous costs. It is therefore to be hoped that the President will find an early opportunity to exhort the over-zealous Ministers or officials, more particularly in the provinces, not to regard themselves as the State in their relations with the Press and further to help the pressmen in every possible way in building up an honest, truthful and independent journalism.

The Gandhian Era has passed. The Freedom Era based on the principles of his teachings and incorporated in the Constitution has begun, with the tried and trusted lieutenants of the Mahatma in the Government. My recollections of the Gandhian Era have been presented in the hope that the reader will be enabled to appreciate the vicissitudes of the recent decades in order to preserve a glorious future for us.

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